

# Rolling Stone

## JOHN MAYER'S REGRETS

## THE FRAGILE BEACH BOYS REUNION

## TV'S LONG HOT SUMMER

TRUE BLOOD  
BREAKING BAD  
KARDASHIANS  
LOUIS C.K.  
DALLAS

AMERICA'S LAST PRISONER OF WAR  
BY MICHAEL HASTINGS

ON THE LOOSE WITH  
**CHARLIE SHEEN**





# GOOD TIMES ROLL ON

**DUMPSTAPHUNK  
TAKES YOU ON A  
PICK YOUR PASSIONS  
TOUR OF LOUISIANA**

WHAT BETTER WAY TO EXPLORE THE FAMOUS CELEBRATIONS, ECLECTIC FOOD AND THE RICH MUSICAL HERITAGE OF LOUISIANA THAN WITH A BAND WHO LIVES AND PLAYS TO THOSE PASSIONS EVERY DAY.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**CEDRIC ANGELES**



**A SOUTHERN POINT OF VIEW**

TOP Dumpstaphunk band members [from left to right] Ivan Neville, Nick Daniels, Nikki Glaspie, Tony Hall and Ian Neville, ABOVE LA nightlife.

LEFT The legendary Preservation Hall

## WHERE WE FOUND THE GOOD TIMES

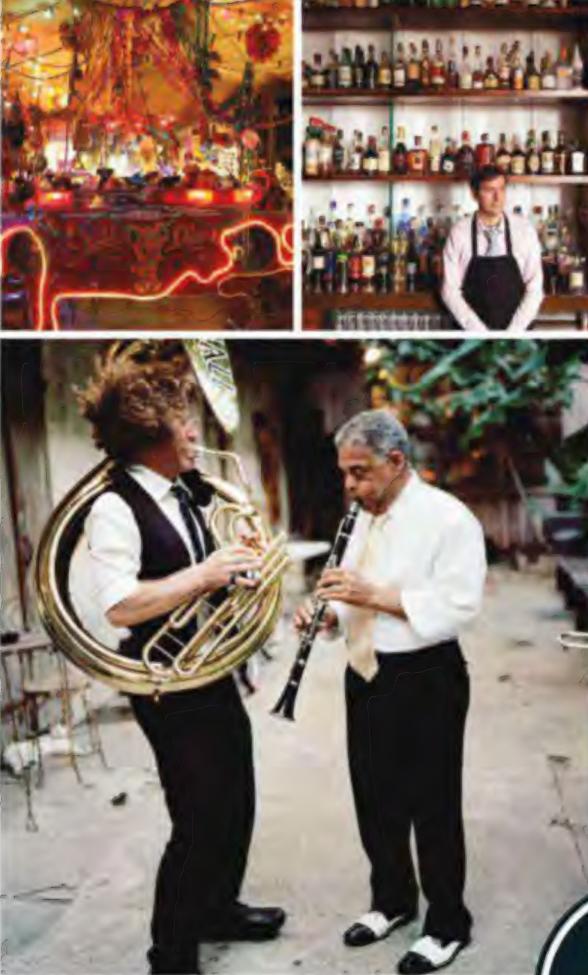
### TIPITINA'S

**501 Napoleon Ave  
NEW ORLEANS**

**CLAIM TO FAME »**

Started as a neighborhood juke joint, Tipitina's is a home away from home for Dumpstaphunk as well as the many spirits of musical legends that have performed in this club over the years.

[tipitinasc.com](http://tipitinasc.com)



**FORMED BY LEGENDARY NEVILLE BROTHERS KEYBOARDIST IVAN NEVILLE,**

**DUMPSTAPHUNK HAS GROWN FROM A SMALL SIDE PROJECT INTO ONE OF MUSIC'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS MODERN FUNK ENSEMBLES.**

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
Zachary's own Teddy's Juke Joint, New Orleans bartender, band eats at Tipitina's, members of the Preservation Hall Band

**1 JACQUE-IMO'S**  
8324 Oak Street  
**NEW ORLEANS**

A "real Nawlins" favorite for the band, this legendary restaurant interprets the city's entire funky psyche in its food and atmosphere. The Dumpstaphunk guys recommend the real, down-home fried chicken with an alligator cheesecake to top it off.

[JACQUESIMOSCAFE.COM](http://jacquesimoscafe.com)



**2 SLIM'S Y-KI-KI**  
Hwy. 182 North Main Street  
**OPELOUSAS**

A genuine Zydeco dance club, Slim's stays true to the roots of Louisiana holding dance festivals, performances and contests centered on Zydeco folk dancers and their soulful style.

[SLIMSYKIIKI.COM](http://slimsykiiki.com)



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**3 FUDGE RECORDING STUDIOS**  
1536 Terpsichore  
**NEW ORLEANS**

The band brought us into their home-base for a special jam in this distinctly Louisiana venue. Adorned with the eclectic musical flair of Louisiana, the widely respected studio is now open for young, aspiring musicians to lay down tracks.

[FUDGERECORDINGSTUDIO.COM](http://fudgerecordingstudio.com)



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**4 THE STRAND THEATRE**  
619 Louisiana Avenue  
**SHREVEPORT**

Built in 1925, The Strand is the Official State Theatre of Louisiana and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This signature music venue of the state also offers top touring Broadway productions, concerts, and comedy shows.

[THESTRANDTHEATRE.COM](http://thestrandtheatre.com)



PHOTO COURTESY SHREVEPORT-BOSIER CONVENTION & TOURIST BUREAU

**5 AVERY ISLAND**

For a true Louisiana retreat, several band members escape to the stillness and bayou exoticism of Avery Island. Among its vast plants and animal species, it is the large pepper fields that give this mysterious place its fame. The island is also home to the world-famous Tabasco Sauce Factory, which ships its sauce from here to over 160 countries around the world.

[TABASCO.COM/AVERY-ISLAND](http://tabasco.com/avery-island)



**6 ARTMOSPHERE BISTRO**  
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**LAFAYETTE**

For a band with a mix of passions, Artmosphere is the perfect stopover when touring the state. Part bistro, bar, art gallery, music venue and all-in-one hookah lounge, the venue is widely known for its open mic nights, performances from local artists and great drink specials.

[FACEBOOK.COM/ARTMOSPHERE1](http://facebook.com/artmosphere1)

**7 RENDEZ VOUS DES CAJUNS RADIO AND TV SHOW**  
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This weekly live concert and dance at the historic Liberty Theater offers visitors the chance to see classic Cajun bands as well as up-and-coming acts, while enjoying an evening of Cajun two-steps and waltzes. In true Cajun spirit, the show is emceed in French. Held every Saturday beginning at 6 p.m.

[EUNICE-LA.COM/LIBERTYSCHEDULE.HTML](http://eunice-la.com/libertyschedule.html)

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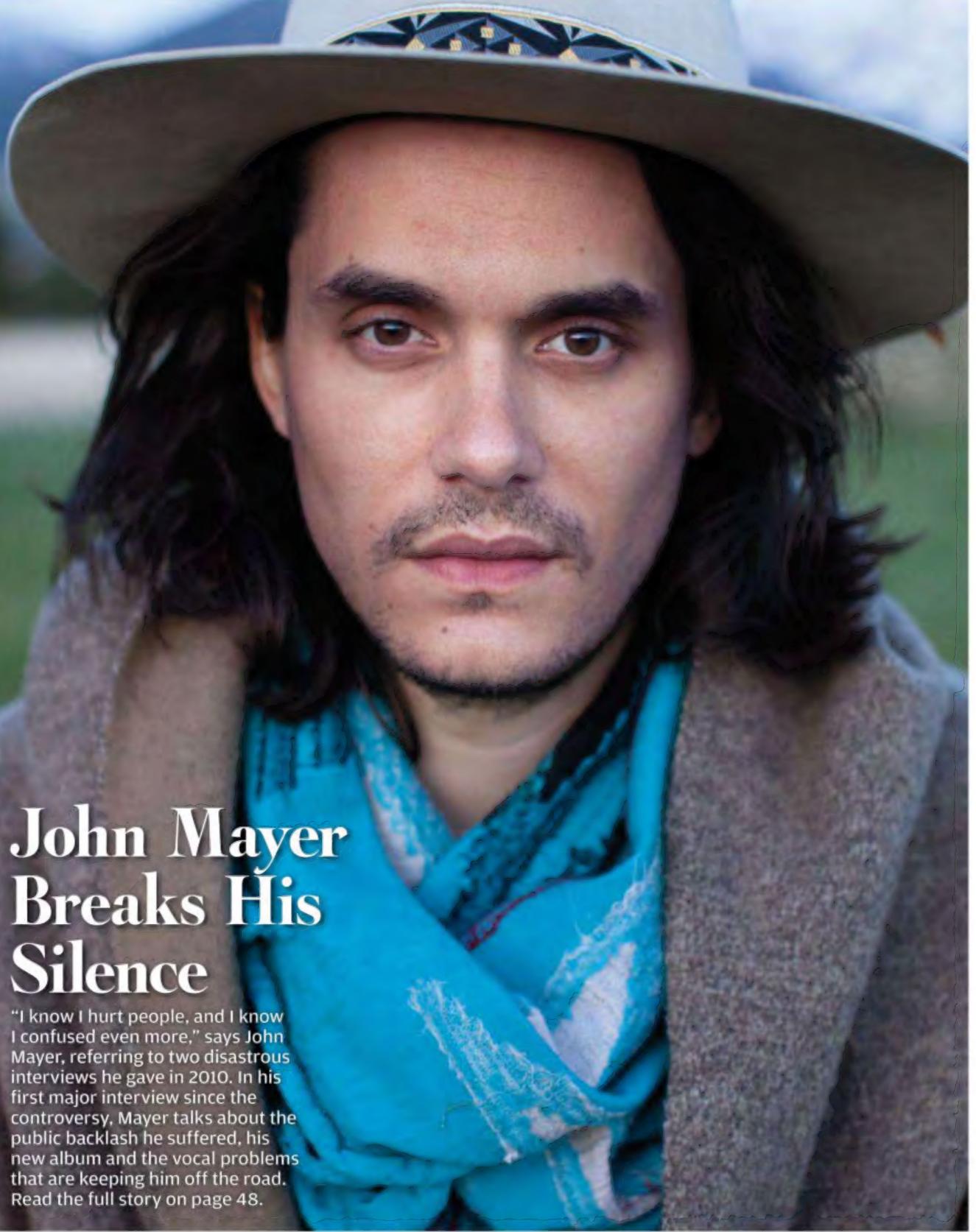
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# RS1159

"ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS"



## John Mayer Breaks His Silence

"I know I hurt people, and I know I confused even more," says John Mayer, referring to two disastrous interviews he gave in 2010. In his first major interview since the controversy, Mayer talks about the public backlash he suffered, his new album and the vocal problems that are keeping him off the road. Read the full story on page 48.

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**ON THE COVER** Charlie Sheen photographed at Melody Ranch Studio in Santa Clarita, California, on May 17th, 2012, by **Peggy Sirota**.

Styling by Michael Nash for Celestine Agency. Hair by Janice Z. Allison. Makeup by Gabriel Solana. Jeans by Hudson.

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## MUSIC

# Behind the Hits

Did you know that Britney Spears almost sang Rihanna's "Umbrella"? Or that Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" wasn't about a drowning? Our new Song Series gives you the history of hundreds of hits.



## The Jam's Paul Weller: Unplugged

The godfather of Brit pop stopped by ROLLING STONE to play a few tunes from his 11th album, *Sonik Kicks*.

## POLITICS

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## PREMIERE



## Exclusive: Neil Young's New LP

Hear a stream of Neil Young and Crazy Horse's folk standards set, *Americana*.



## TV

## The Best of 'True Blood'

A look at the sexiest and most shocking moments of the past four seasons.

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# Correspondence

## { Love Letters & Advice }



### Watch the Throne

YES! A COVER FEATURING Peter Dinklage was long overdue ["Master of the Game," RS 1157]. Thanks for showcasing one of our finest actors.

Stacey Killian, Salt Lake City

WHEN I RECEIVED THIS issue in the mail, I did a double take: I thought it was Dave Grohl on the cover. Kudos for the tasteful feature on the supremely talented and handsome Peter Dinklage.

Rachael Parry, via the Internet

BRIAN HIATT'S STORY ON the wonderful Peter Dinklage was terrific. I also appreciated Gavin Edwards' lovely conversation with *Game of Thrones* author George R.R. Martin ["The Hand Behind the Throne," RS 1157]. What a great combo!

Nancy DeSisto, via the Internet

THE INTERVIEW WITH George R.R. Martin was fantastic. I especially liked his quote about how readers and viewers will accept the shock value of violence in his work while acting prudish about the sexual content.

Michael Anderson, Rocklin, CA

### Killing Reform

YET ANOTHER BRILLIANT, incisive, hilarious Washington and Wall Street takedown from Matt Taibbi ["The Slow, Painful Death of Dodd-Frank," RS 1157]. Like Taibbi's other reports, it left me torn between wanting to take to the streets or wanting to start a stupor-inducing heroin habit.

Jim Haefele, Rockville, MD

WHAT WAS AT FIRST AN UNEXPECTED TREASURE IN SUBSCRIBING TO RS HAS NOW BECOME MY main reason for reading: Matt Taibbi's most recent critique of the pernicious relationship between Wall Street and Washington is another fine example of his gift of unraveling the cryptic machinations of high finance. His next book should be an anthology of his RS pieces since the economic collapse in 2008. Keep them coming.

Randall Moon, Hazard, KY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR straightforward description of the crimes of Wall Street.

I only hope the public takes back American democracy, or at least acknowledges that what we're doing right now is not working.

Caelann Rae Wood, Concord, CA

TAIBBI IS WRONG WHEN HE says "might will always make right." We can take back our government and make it represent us instead of the bankers by asking candidates a simple question: Will you support a constitutional amendment to ban contributions from special interest groups in political campaigns?

Rick Staggenborg  
Coos Bay, OR

to the stage for years. Against Me! have always vocalized a true punk ethos by addressing cultural and topical issues in their songs, and I can't wait to hear what she sings about next.

Steven Hogan, Banner Elk, NC

I WAS SO INSPIRED BY YOUR story on Tom Gabel. As the child of a transsexual father, I grew up in a seriously fucked-up world where my parents pretended life was a Norman Rockwell painting and hid everything behind closed doors. When the divorce came, it was a relief. I wish my parents could have had the courage to be as open and honest. Great story.

M.A., Stroudsburg, PA

JOSH ELLS WROTE A BEAUTIFUL article welcoming Laura Jane Grace into the world. Her fans are grateful.

Jade Montoya, Gilbert, AZ

CONGRATULATIONS, LAURA Jane Grace, for your courage

**"Josh Eells wrote a beautiful article welcoming Laura Jane Grace into the world. Her fans are grateful."**

### Laura's New Life

I'D NEVER HEARD OF Against Me! or Tom Gabel before this article ["The Secret Life of Tom Gabel," RS 1157], but I wish her all the best. The world needs more strong, sensible and loving women like her wife, Heather, and her mother.

Becky Stevens, Cheney, WA

THANKS TO LAURA JANE FOR having the courage to share this pivotal transition with the same raw honesty she's brought

and dignity. As a fiftysomething transgender, I found so many parallels in your story to my life. There is a large transgender community that is proud of you for showing others that there is nothing to be ashamed of.

Mary Beth Cooper, Providence, RI

AS A PSYCHOLOGIST WORKING with children and adolescents, I know the lives of transgendered youth are usually filled with shame, doubt and isolation. Reading about such an influential musician's experience and how supportive his wife and family are provides a hopeful outlook on a topic seldom addressed publicly.

Lesley A. Gould, San Jose, CA

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### Defending the Earth

Contributor wins award for his environmental reporting

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR JEFF Goodell will be the recipient of the Sierra Club's 2012 David Brower Award, which recognizes exceptional environmental reporting. Goodell's investigations have anchored RS's environmental coverage for more than a decade, with articles like "The Fracking Bubble" (RS 1152), which helped oust billionaire fracker Aubrey McClendon from the board of his own compa-



ny; last year's apocalyptic "The End of Australia" (RS 1141); and 2010's "The Dark Lord of Coal Country" (RS 1119), which hastened Don Blankenship's retirement. "This award is really a tribute to RS's deep commitment to covering these issues," Goodell says. "I'm lucky to work for a magazine that gives me the freedom to write about what I discover, no matter the consequences or who it pisses off."



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# Rock & Roll

BURNING UP  
Madonna in  
Tel Aviv.



## Madonna Gets Back Into the Groove

World tour kicks off with new jams, classic hits and a dig at Lady Gaga

MADONNA LAUNCHED her 65-city world tour with a heavy dose of Catholic iconography, monster hits and a surprising violent twist at Tel Aviv's Ramat Gan Stadium on May 31st. The

19-song set focused on club-ready tracks from this year's *MDNA* and classics including "Like a Virgin" and "Papa Don't Preach" – and she even debuted an updated version of her cone-shaped bra from 1990's *Blond Ambition* Tour.

The night's most talked-about moments were a mock execution of her backup danc-

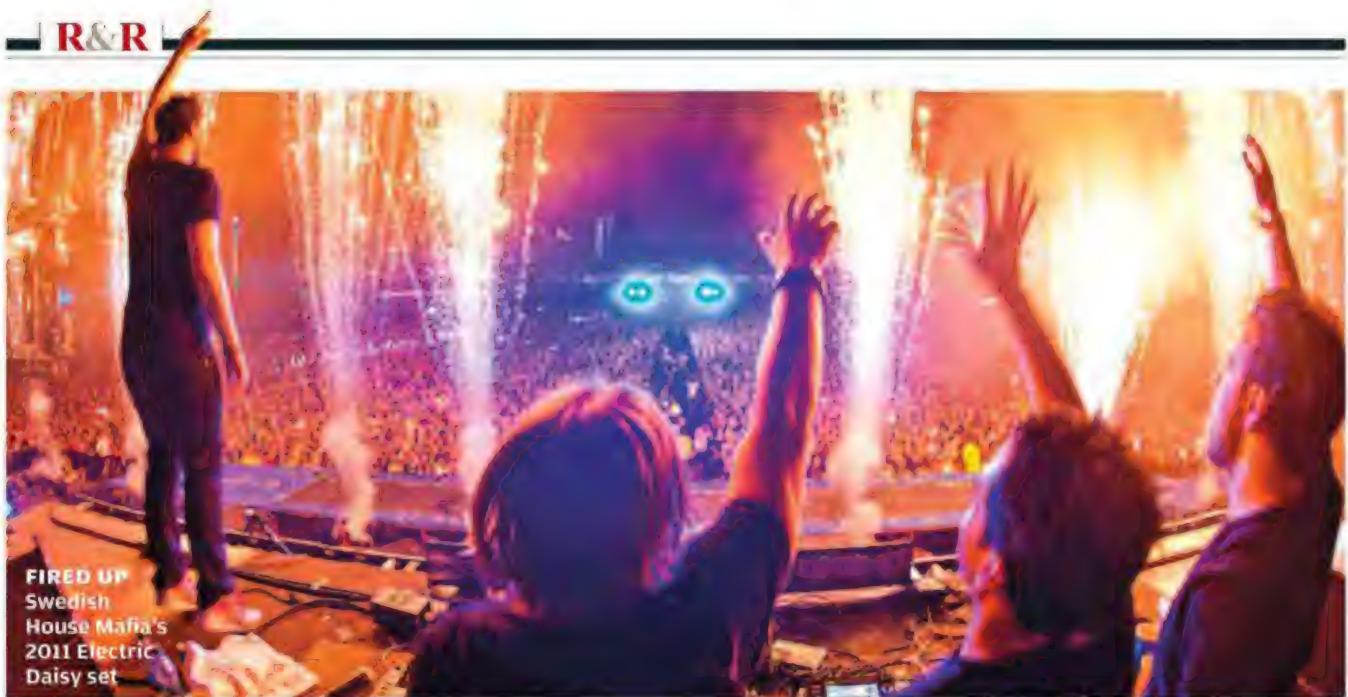
ers and a taunting medley of 1989's "Express Yourself" with Lady Gaga's startlingly similar 2011 hit "Born This Way." The show also included a plea for peace: "I chose to start my world tour in Israel for an important reason," Madonna told the crowd. "We're all sons and daughters of the universe and human beings." **ANDY GREENE**

## Inside Dance Music's New Boom

Top DJs now make \$1 million a show – how big can the scene get? By Steve Knopper

IT TOOK NINE MINUTES last fall for Swedish House Mafia to show the concert business that electronic dance music was suddenly big enough to compete with Jay-Z or Phish in the world's biggest venues. In late September, the European DJ trio's manager, Amy Thomson, put a December 16th show at Madison Square Garden on sale via Facebook – and 20,000 tickets sold out almost instantly. "Since that point," says Thomson, "a lot of the large promoters assumed if you can blow out Madison Square Garden in nine minutes, then this scene must be able to sell out 100 Madison Squares."

Swedish House Mafia's arena-size house party – a massive laser-and-pyro-fueled spectacle – completed the transformation of electronic dance music, or EDM, from DJs spinning in urban clubs to an international concert-biz phenomenon. This month, 345,000 fans are expected to attend the Electric Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas. Top stars like Skrillex, David Guetta and Kaskade headline arenas and festivals, and Deadmau5 sold 40,000 tickets to club shows in New



**Fired Up**  
Swedish House Mafia's 2011 Electric Daisy set

York and L.A. last fall. DJs from the scene have become some of pop's hottest producers, with Afrojack and Calvin Harris crafting hits for Rihanna and Pitbull. "I see Deadmau5 T-shirts at Target," says Matthew Adell, chief executive of Beatport, the Denver dance-music download store that has sold 90 million tracks and grown from three to 80 employees since 2004. "When we play in the U.S. there's the excitement of a new musical movement," adds Guetta. "It's wonderful to feel this."

The boom has attracted intense interest from top players in the tour industry. Live Nation, the world's largest concert promoter, bought British dance-festival promoter Creamfields for roughly \$21 million in May, and live-music veteran Robert F.X. Sillerman and supermarket magnate Ron Burkle (both billionaires) are reportedly trying to jump into the festival market. "This massive rise is just the beginning," says Skrillex's agent Lee Anderson. "It's not much different than hip-hop in the late Eighties – it's a subculture, and all of a sudden Beastie Boys and Run-DMC are doing arena tours."

For top DJs, paydays have skyrocketed: The biggest names earn more than \$1 million to headline a festival and \$10 million a year for a Las Vegas nightclub residency, according to *The New York Times*. Producer salaries for remixing commercial tracks have leaped

## Summer's Hottest Dance Parties

Four fests with the biggest beats and craziest lights

### Hard Summer

**Los Angeles, August 3rd-4th**  
**\$119-\$250**

A deep roster of huge DJs (Skrillex, Nero) and superhip acts (James Murphy, A-Trak) takes over an L.A. park for a two-day blowout.



### Lollapalooza

**Chicago, August 3rd-5th**  
**\$75-\$230**

EDM is a bigger part of the alt-rock festival than ever, with major stars from Kaskade to Avicii set to shake the dance tent this year.



### Burning Man

**Black Rock City, Nevada,**  
**August 27th-September 3rd**  
**\$240-\$420**

Top DJs rock mega sound systems all day and all night at camps like "The Opulent Temple" during the superpsychedelic desert experience.



### Electric Zoo

**New York, August 31st-September 2nd**  
**\$299-\$1,199**

Spend Labor Day weekend getting wild with Diplo, Skrillex, Tiësto and nearly 100 more.

by "hundreds of percentages," says Hugo Langras, manager of Afrojack and R3hab: "In the early days it was maybe a couple of thousand, and now some of them have five zeroes."

The success is a major vindication for promoters who have been nurturing the scene as it rose from illegal raves to Bonnaroo-dwarfing megafestivals. "In '91, I could only hear this music at two in the morning in downtown L.A.,"

says Gary Richards, founder of Hard Events, which promotes festivals from L.A. to Toronto. Major rock events have boosted their EDM lineups, too: At 2008's Lollapalooza, creator Perry Farrell arranged a small stage with the late DJ AM in which the sound system kept malfunctioning; last year, the dance tent held 15,000 people. "In Europe, it's just massive," says Farrell. "We're behind, but catching up extremely quick."

Swedish House Mafia spent months marketing their MSG show with secret codes and YouTube videos, but not all tours scaling up to arenas are going as smoothly. This summer, Avicii and Afrojack are playing arenas, but both postponed or canceled dates due to production issues. "There have been EDM shows in these arenas for the last 10 years, but there's a perception that 'Well, these things aren't doing as well as you thought,'" responds Joel Zimmerman, who runs the

William Morris Agency's electronic-music department and represents Avicii, Afrojack and 200 others. "This thing is not going away, ever – it's just that people are going to start getting a lot smarter."

The scene's biggest player, L.A.-based Insomniac, which produces the Electric Daisy Carnival, has had to battle the lingering perception that the events are dangerous: In 2010, a 15-year-old girl died of a suspected drug overdose at the Electric Daisy Carnival in L.A., forcing promoters to move the festival last year to Vegas. (Of course, fans have died at rock fests, too.) Insomniac CEO Pasquale Rotella also recently appeared in a Los Angeles court to face corruption charges involving payments to the city-owned venue that hosted the L.A. Electric Daisy. (His attorneys have denied wrongdoing, and some of the charges have already been dropped.) Despite his problems, Rotella remains astonished by the genre's mainstream success. "Finding a venue when I first started that wouldn't get busted – that was challenging," he says. "There was this stigma attached to dance music. Now you'll run into police officers who go, 'Oh, I love Daft Punk!' In '99-2000, I was doing 40,000 people, and I was like, 'Wow, this is peaking, this is crazy.' I didn't think it would get any bigger. And it did."

Additional reporting by  
Dan Hyman



More as this story develops.

JEFF DANIELS  
EMILY MORTIMER  
JOHN GALLAGHER, JR.  
ALISON PILL  
THOMAS SADOSKI  
DEV PATEL  
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# ON THE CHARTS

## Justin Bieber's Canadian Pal Scores the Song of the Summer

Meet Carly Rae Jepsen, the reality-TV runner-up behind 'Call Me Maybe'

**S**HORTLY AFTER CHRISTMAS 2011, Justin Bieber was washing dishes at his relatives' home in Canada when a pop song on the radio caught his ear. "'Call Me Maybe' by Carly Rae Jepsen is possibly the catchiest song I've ever heard LOL," Bieber wrote to his 16 million Twitter followers — and then things got wild. "After Justin's tweet, people from Germany were suddenly messaging me saying they liked the song," says Jepsen, whose tune had been a minor hit in Canada. "It was crazy!"

"Call Me Maybe" has gone on to become one of 2012's biggest hits, rocketing to Number Two on *Billboard's* Hot 100, selling nearly 3 million downloads and racking up more than 87 million YouTube views. "I think we're in a position where it's going to be the song of the summer," says Julie Pilat, music director at L.A.'s KIIS FM. "There's so much heat on her."

Bieber helped generate a lot of that heat. Two months after his tweet, he, Selena Gomez and Ashley Tisdale uploaded a video of themselves lip-syncing "Call Me Maybe." Around the same time, Jepsen signed with School Boy Records, the Universal imprint run by Bieber's manager, Scooter Braun. The song has also been boosted by YouTube clips starring every-



one from Katy Perry (1.3 million views) to the Harvard baseball team (11.4 million).

While teen fans may assume that Jepsen is their age, the singer — who placed third on *Canadian Idol* in 2007 — actually turned 26 late last year. "I don't feel like I look 16," she says. "But a woman likes to hear she looks younger than she is."

Jepsen is now in Atlanta writing songs with Dallas Austin and prepping to open

for Bieber on his summer tour. One potential roadblock: If "Call Me Maybe" keeps gaining momentum, it could get in the way of a follow-up single. "I'd be naive not to have that concern," says Jepsen's manager Jonathan Simkin. "But what are we going to do? Stop promoting the single? The great thing about working with songwriters is that they have a way of solving that problem: by writing another hit." **ANDY GREENE**

## IN THE NEWS

### Beatles musical headed to L.A., Broadway

*Backbeat*, adapted from the 1994 film about the Beatles' early years, will open in a Los Angeles theater in January

before hitting Broadway — possibly next spring. The show, which features tunes covered by the Beatles like "Long Tall Sally" and "Twist and Shout," focuses on the band's beginnings in Liverpool and Hamburg, Germany. In other news, *Hands on a Hardbody*, featuring new music by Phish's Trey Anastasio, will move from La Jolla, California, to Broadway during the next year.

**Against Me! singer plays first show as a woman**

Against Me! rocked San Diego on May 25th — lead singer **Laura Jane Grace**'s first performance with the punk crew since coming out as transgender in *ROLLING STONE* last month. The 40-minute set featured six new songs, including "Transgender Dysphoria Blues," currently slated to be

the title track of Against Me!'s next album. "I was worried that some people expected me to come out looking like Little Bo-Peep or something," says Grace, formerly known as **Tom Gabel**. "But transitioning is a process. This is where I'm at now. I feel totally empowered." Against Me!'s tour runs through June 23rd.

### Bono to present human rights award in Dublin

The **U2** frontman will give Amnesty International's highest honor to Burmese opposition leader **Aung San Suu Kyi** at a Dublin ceremony on June 18th — the day after Suu Kyi, 66, receives the Nobel Peace Prize she was awarded in absentia in 1991. Suu Kyi is traveling the world for the first time in 24 years after a lengthy house arrest imposed by Burma's military dictatorship.

 "It's so rare to see grace trump military might, and when it happens, we should make the most joyful noise we can," Bono said. "Aung San Suu Kyi's grace and courage have tilted a wobbly world further in the direction of democracy."



## 'Idol' Winner Lands a Hit

Ratings for May 23rd's *American Idol* finale fell to 21.5 million, down nearly 8 million from last year — but so far, winner Phillip Phillips isn't suffering. The Dave Matthews-ish singer's single "Home" hit Number Two, selling 278,000 downloads in its first week. "It's still the biggest show on TV," says Steve Berman, a top exec at Phillips' label, Interscope Geffen A&M. The Georgia native — who underwent multiple kidney surgeries while on *Idol* — plans to record his debut LP between stops on this summer's *American Idol Live!* Tour. Says Phillips, "I don't think there's going to be too much sleeping this summer."

**STEVE KNOPPER**



**BAD  
COMBO**

**GOOD**



## TRIBUTES

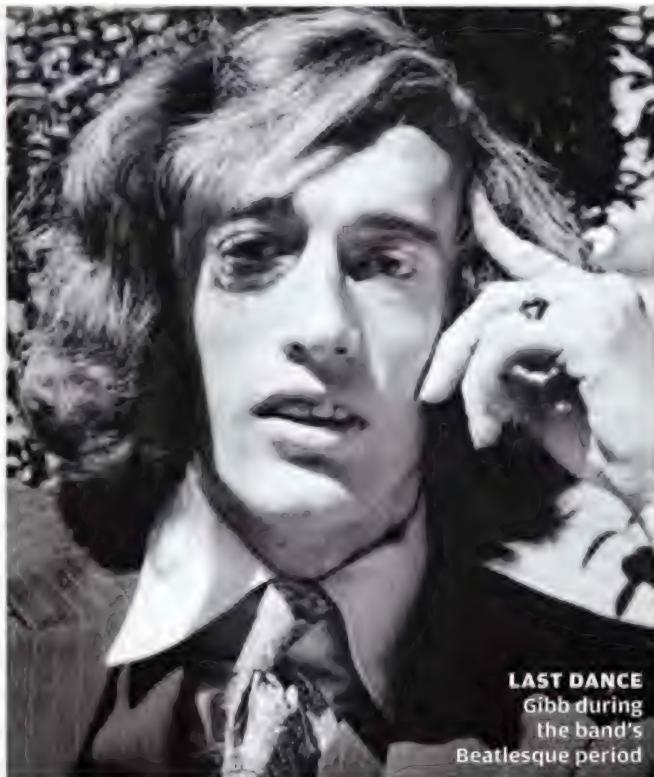
# Robin Gibb, Bee Gees Singer, Dies at 62

Band of brothers scored many of the Seventies' biggest disco hits

THE BEE GEES' ROBIN Gibb, whose quivering vibrato helped power some of the hugest hits of the disco era, died on May 20th from kidney failure in London after a long battle with cancer. He was 62.

Born on the Isle of Man and raised in Australia, the brothers Gibb – Robin; his twin, Maurice, who died in 2003; and older sibling Barry – first broke through in the late Sixties with Beatlesque hits including "New York Mining Disaster 1941," "I Started a Joke" and "I've Gotta Get a Message to You."

"Robin was a little shy," says longtime Bee Gees keyboardist Blue Weaver. But he also had strong ideas about the band's future: In 1969, feuding with Barry over whose songs would be released as singles, he briefly left the group. The following year, Robin made the first call to Barry, reuniting the brothers. "If we hadn't been related, we would probably never have gotten back together," Robin said at the time.



In 1975, the group immersed itself in a new brand of up-tempo R&B – resulting in one of the biggest second winds for a pop band ever. Manager Robert Stigwood, who was producing the movie *Saturday Night*

*Fever*, had the Bee Gees record the bulk of the soundtrack, spawning megasmash singles including "How Deep Is Your Love," "Night Fever" and "Stayin' Alive." "As soon as the falsetto thing happened with

Barry, Robin was always saying, 'Barry should be doing the lead – we need falsetto on this,'" Weaver recalls. "They had a winning formula. He would say, 'Oh, God, we've got six records in the Top 10 this week – that hasn't been done since the Beatles."

The Bee Gees disbanded after Maurice died due to complications from a twisted intestine. Robin and Barry reunited periodically – in 2010, they appeared on *American Idol* and inducted Abba into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – and talked about a duo tour with their Seventies band, but nothing materialized.

Through it all, Robin retained his sense of humor. After seeing Jimmy Fallon and Justin Timberlake's hilarious Bee Gees bits on *Saturday Night Live*, Robin visited Fallon's late-night show. "Robin was really funny," says Fallon, a lifelong Bee Gees fan. "He had, like, five jokes ready to tell me. Robin gave me an autographed photo from Barry Gibb that I have hanging in my dressing room. I'm just happy I got to tell him how much I loved him."

DAVID BROWNE

## Singer-Guitarist Doc Watson, Led Folk Revival

Blue Ridge Mountains native, 89, influenced Jerry Garcia, Ry Cooder

THE BLIND SINGER-GUITARIST Doc Watson, who died on May 29th at the age of 89 following a fall in his home in Deep Gap, North Carolina, was one of the most popular and influential figures of the American folk revival. A flat-picking master who adapted fiddle and banjo melodies with breathtaking speed and melodic clarity, he left a deep imprint on a generation of players coming out of folk to rock in the mid-Sixties, including Ry Cooder and the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia. "Jerry gobbled

up a bunch of Doc's stuff," confirms mandolinist David Grisman, who played with and was a close friend of both men.

Watson also kept America's traditional-folk songbook alive for mainstream audiences with his vast grasp of rags, blues and ballads, and his easy-going vocal ways. A Watson show was "like you were in his home," Grisman says. "He'd say, 'I don't play any different for you folks than if you were in my living room.' He was the most appealing version of American roots you could get."

Born Arthel Lane Watson on March 3rd, 1923, he was discovered in Deep Gap in 1960 by folklorists Ralph Rinzler



and Eugene Earle, who got a tip from local banjo master Clarence Ashley. By 1961, Watson – who was blinded as an infant by an eye infection – was dazzling the New York folk scene with his virtuosity and repertoire. "He was a preternatural musician, not quite of

this world," says singer-songwriter Eric Andersen, who shared bills with Watson in the Sixties. "He was like Ray Charles or Stevie Wonder – he couldn't see, but he had music swimming around in him all the time."

Watson, who also played banjo and mandolin, recorded more than two dozen studio and live albums – many with his guitarist-son Merle, who died in 1985 – and participated in the all-star sessions for the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 1972 prophetic alternative-country classic, *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*. But Watson never strayed far from his origins in the Blue Ridge Mountains. "Years ago, on his birthday, I gave him a mandolin," Grisman says. "The last time I saw him, he said he still played it at square dances." DAVID FRICKE

# IN THE STUDIO

## Animal Collective Cut 'Relentless' LP

Inside the follow-up to the psychedelic indie crew's 2009 breakout

**A**NIMAL COLLECTIVE'S blissed-out 2009 LP, *Merriweather Post Pavilion*, made them the indie kings of 21st-century psychedelia – but the band wouldn't dream of repeating itself on the follow-up. "For better or for worse, if we feel like we've gotten into a habit of something, we make a 180-degree turn," says guitarist Josh Dibb (a.k.a. Deakin).

So in January 2011, the bandmates – including multi-instrumentalists Noah Lennox (a.k.a. Panda Bear), Dave Portner (a.k.a. Avey Tare) and Brian Weitz (a.k.a. Geologist) – returned to their hometown of Baltimore and holed up at Dibb's mother's house, jamming together every day for three months like they used to in high school. "It's a pretty aggressive, relentless record," Dibb says of Animal Collective's 10th LP, *Centipede Hz*, due this fall. "That probably comes from four dudes in a room writing music with really loud amps. It



**ANIMAL STYLE**  
Portner, Lennox, Dibb  
and Weitz (from left)

feels like an 18-year-old with a garage band."

Early this year the band took the new tunes to Sonic Ranch studios, hidden deep inside a pecan orchard outside El Paso, Texas. While *Merriweather* was built mostly around electronic beats, this time Lennox played live drums. The band also cut back on the radiant vocal arrangements that defined the last LP. "There was definitely a group choice to focus a lot more on individual voices rather than layered harmony vocals," Dibb

says. "We've done so much of that in the past."

The group has already released two recent outtakes: the bouncy, head-spinning "Honeycomb" and the heart-wrenching, futuristic "Gotham." Dibb's current favorite tracks include "Father Time" and "Monkey Riches," which is full of manic, manipulated vocals. "It's energetic and emotional – there's just something about it that's trance-y."

*Centipede Hz* is the first Animal Collective LP that Dibb

worked on since 2007, following an extended break for personal reasons. "I was just essentially really fragile," says the guitarist. "I could tip over from feeling good to feeling really overwhelmed." Dibb's hiatus – which included a 2010 trip to Mali, and a few gigs in Europe opening for bandmate Lennox – left him feeling recharged. Says Dibb, "I definitely have a renewed sense of appreciation of the work I put into the band."

While the bandmates are now well into their thirties, and two have young kids, they're still hoping to create mind-expanding sonic experiences. "We all talk and think about music in psychedelic terms," Dibb says. "Just in the way edges can blur between sound, or lyrics can indicate multiple ideas."

Animal Collective have announced only a handful of shows for this year, including a night at L.A.'s Hollywood Bowl in September, but more U.S. dates are coming. Says Dibb, "We need to find the balance of being really psyched on the road and not being burnt out or tearing apart your family."

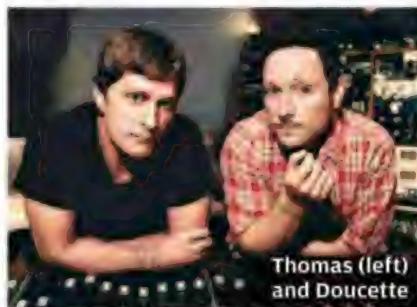
PATRICK DOYLE

## Matchbox Twenty Return After 10 Years

Talking Heads, hip-hop inspire the pop-rock hitmakers' comeback

**A** DECADE AFTER THEIR last full new album, Matchbox Twenty are back – but getting here wasn't easy. "We had to figure out a new way to work," says guitarist-drummer Paul Doucette, sitting in the control room of the Calabasas, California, studio where the band is mixing *North* (due out September 4th). "It's been 10 years since we made a record, and we're not the same people."

During the band's hiatus, frontman Rob Thomas launched a successful solo career, while Doucette, guitarist Kyle Cook and bassist Brian Yale worked on side proj-



ects. The road to *North* began in the summer of 2011, when Matchbox Twenty regrouped in Nashville to start writing together. They bonded over their favorite music from the Eighties – soaking up everything from Paul Simon and INXS to Talking Heads. "We watched *Stop Making Sense* in the studio," Thomas says. "David Byrne is like an alien!"

They ended up exploring an electro-laced, danceable vibe. "We've never put the drums this far forward on a Matchbox Twenty record," says their longtime producer, Matt Serletic. "I'm doing things more typical of a hip-hop record." But they also made room for heartfelt acoustic ballads such as "I Will," which Thomas says "feels like a guy sitting in a room with a guitar, bleeding the song out."

Adds Serletic, "At the album's core, there's a heartbeat from a band, and a great vocalist delivering an emotional lyric. Those two things haven't changed."

MATT DIEHL

### STUDIO NOTE

#### Phish prep for new, live-feeling LP

The jam wizards hope to hit the studio this fall to cut their first album since 2009's *Joy*. "We're going to try to create something that really comes from the four of us," says keyboardist Page McConnell. "As opposed to bringing songs to the table, we're going to try to create something more in-the-moment together, which we haven't really done much of in the studio." In the meantime, Phish will be touring the U.S. all summer, with as many as 200 songs in their arsenal for each night's set list. "It feels really good right now," McConnell says. "As long as the four of us are alive, we'd like to keep doing this."



Trey Anastasio

# Neil Young

**On Crazy Horse's new ragged glory, his 'hippie dream' memoir and the future of Buffalo Springfield**

By Austin Scaggs

**A** FEW MONTHS AGO, NEIL YOUNG got together with his old Crazy Horse buddies to jam on some tunes that he learned to play decades earlier with one of his first bands, the Squires. "Back in 1964 or '65, the Squires were playing a folk club in Thunder Bay, Ontario," says Young, 66. "A group called the Thorns did a version of 'Oh Susannah' that just knocked me on my ass."

Crazy Horse's furious garage interpretation of "Oh Susannah" – plus ragged covers of "Clementine," "This Land Is Your Land" and more – became the centerpiece of *Americana*, the band's first album in nearly nine years. The sessions went so well that Young and Crazy Horse have already completed another LP, due later this year, and are plotting a major fall tour. "I wanted to play with Crazy Horse, and I wanted to rock," Young says. "These songs could do that."

#### Why do a covers album?

I didn't have any new songs myself, and I wasn't looking forward to writing any. Doing new songs requires a lot of nerve, because people are always comparing me to my history, instead of looking at the thing for what it is. I've grown tired of people pontificating. But that's just my own problem.

**It sounds like you guys had a blast making this album. Is that why you made another one right away?**

Yeah, it's the same energy, because we're in the exact same place. We never stopped recording. We just kept on going and made a record of original material.

#### So you wrote a few new songs after all?

Yeah, after I got *Americana* done. The songs are too long [laughs]. There are lots of instrumentals, lots of excursions, but they're real

songs. It has one song that's 26 minutes long. It begs for a better sonic world.

#### Is that part of why you're developing a new high-definition digital audio format?

Technology has moved at such a lightning pace that it needs a new format. With MP3s, people only get five percent of the data that we were giving them in the Seventies. It's like listening to Fisher-Price records! I love music because of the visceral feeling in your body, your soul, your spirit, your mind, your heart.

#### You also have a memoir coming out this year. What are you writing about?

It's not chronological, and it has a diary aspect to it – about creativity in the 21st century, as well as the history of whatever I did. It also has a lot of fantasy projection into the future. It's kind of a hippie dream, really, is what it is. I'm in the final editing stages.

#### In 2010 you lost your friend and sideman Ben Keith. How has his death affected your music?

He was one of my best friends in this life, and I miss him dearly. It's a huge void. No one can play those steel parts like Ben – I wouldn't want to hear anybody try. So I have retired all of those songs he played on, unless I do them solo. And that's a lot of my songs! But since Ben's gone, it has also opened up a huge space in my head to do more music. There's an old saying, "The barn's burned down, now I can see the moon."

#### Did all this Crazy Horse activity delay the Buffalo Spring-

#### field tour fans expected this year?

The Springfield tour was short, but it happened. It was good. You played only seven dates, though there was talk of as many as 30. Will you ever do a longer Springfield tour?

That could happen, but it's not happening now. I'd be on a tour of my past for the rest of fucking time, which I can't do. I have to be able to move forward. I can't be relegated. I did enough of it for right then – but there is this seed of something great still there. It's worth exploring again.

#### So what will the Crazy Horse tour be like? Mostly old songs or new?

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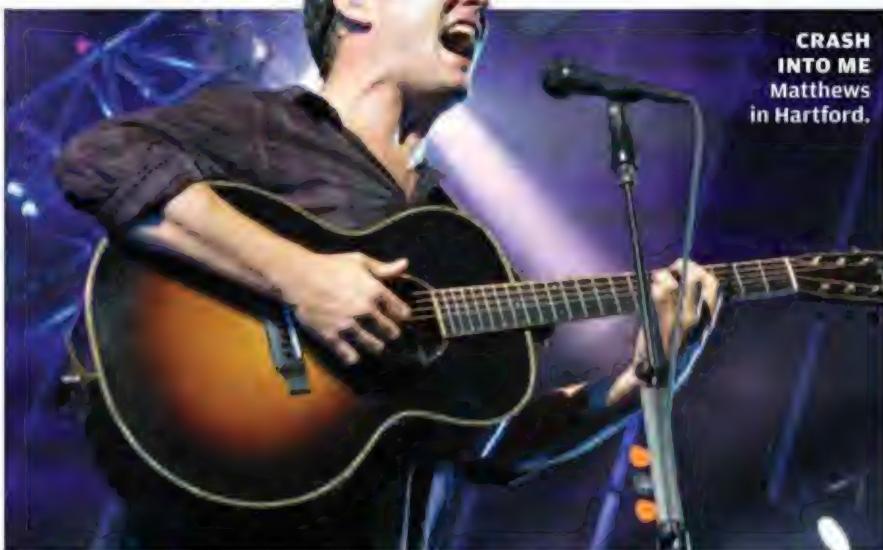
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# ON THE ROAD



## **CRASH INTO ME**

# Dave Matthews Band Bust Out Deep Cuts (and Lasers!)

The kings of summer return to the road with new tunes, rarities. Plus: Inside their forthcoming LP

**M**ORE THAN 30,000 FANS ROARED as Dave Matthews walked onstage at the Comcast Theatre in Hartford, Connecticut, with a ukulele in his hands on the muggy night of May 26th. "You know the feeling when you're in too deep," Matthews sang, breaking out "Sweet," a lullaby he wrote last year after teaching his four-year-old son how to swim. "But if you make it out, the taste is so sweet."

Life is pretty sweet right now for the Dave Matthews Band, which kicked off

Dave Matthews Band

**May 26th. Hartford, Connecticut**

their latest tour on May 18th. After taking most of last year off, aside from staging a handful of their own Caravan festivals, they're back to their usual monster summer schedule — lighting up huge outdoor venues like New York's Jones Beach Theater and Wisconsin's Alpine Valley Music Theatre before wrapping September 9th in Mountain View, California. "It's good to be back," says violinist Boyd Tinsley. "It's cool to go out and watch the old fans and a whole new generation of kids. That's inspiring."

In the Hartford parking lot, the pre-show party was in full swing, as basketball-jersey-wearing dudes chugged beers. Onstage, the band stretched out – 2009's "Funny the Way It Is" became a slow-building prog jam complete with a wild laser show, and Matthews got down to guitarist Tim Reynolds'

Hendrix-ish riffs on 1996's "Two Step." It all led up to a dramatic encore, when Matthews howled the 1998 rarity "Halloween," followed by a lengthy Carter Beauford drum solo that segued into fan favorite "Tripping Billies." The gig even impressed long-time DMB producer Steve Lillywhite, who tweeted, "Home from one of the most incredible gigs I have ever seen. Period."

Fans can expect more deep cuts this summer: The band recently played "Seek Up," which dates back to its club days in Charlottesville, Virginia. "There are so many songs, some that I've even forgotten," says Tinsley. "I have a feeling that we're gonna be bringing things back from the past." The group has also been busting out lots of new material, including the delicate ballad "Mercy" and "Gaucho," where Matthews imagines a conversation with his kids about the America he grew up in. "Let me show you a movie/You know, we landed a man on the moon," he sings before the heartfelt chorus: "We gotta do much more than believe if we really want to change things."

Recording is well under way on DMB's eighth album (due out in the fall), which they began cutting with Lillywhite in Seattle in January. "In a way it feels like the beginning again," says Tinsley. "I don't think that I've ever had as much fun in a studio session as this. It was a creative process where everybody was going for it and opening up. It just sounded like a DMB album from the past - [1994's] *Under the Table and Dreaming*, or even [1996's] *Crash*. This was a continuation of that."

Adds the violinist, "People allowed us to be ourselves for years. They still do. We're really grateful." **PATRICK DOYLE**

PATRICK DOYLE



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# The Psychedelic Gospel of Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

Riding along with  
America's Zen-est band  
By Lizzy Goodman

**E**DWARD SHARPE AND the Magnetic Zeros juice their own greens, know things about chakras, and use phrases like "divine flow" and "align your truth" without irony. In other words, any preconceived notions you have about the 12-piece Los Angeles crew from the way they look (Jesus and his flock, basically) and sound (indie-rock tent revival) are right on the money.

Right now, the band is gathered backstage before a show at Boston's Orpheum Theater. Frontman Alex Ebert, wearing a dingy long-sleeve thermal T-shirt, is midway through some pre-show downward dogs when a roadie arrives with a gift from a fan. "This is from that crazy shaman guy?" a bandmate asks. Ebert tears open the package, revealing a singing bowl decorated with fat smiling Buddhas. He begins dragging the pestlelike rod around the rim of the metal bowl, creating a low hum — and soon the band and crew are humming along. Shots of mescal are passed around, and the band invites me to join in its ritual pre-show huddle. We all take three deep breaths. Then the house lights cut out, the crowd explodes, and as Ebert runs onstage, he looks back and yells, happily, "Your shoulders now smell like my pits!"

It's hard to think of a song that says 2009 quite as much as "Home," the inescapable breakout single from the band's debut album, *Up From Below*. It was all over the radio, in everything from NFL ads to *Gossip Girl*, and it vaulted the Zeros from a cult L.A. band to festival headliners. The follow-up, *Here*, is even catchier, bigger-sounding and more *Free to Be You and Me*-ish: overstuffed with lush harmonies, oddball rhymes, cheery percussion and hippie-ish spiritual declarations. The theme is summed up



MAGIC BUS  
Ebert (right)  
and the Zeros

by the pensive "Dear Believer," on which Ebert sings, "Reaching for heaven is what I'm on Earth to do." "What I mean is that trying for heaven *here* is what we're on Earth to do," the singer says. "Reaching for it now, not later."

Ebert, 34, grew up in Los Angeles; his dad was a therapist and his mom was an actress. The very first lines on *Up From Below*'s title track — "I was only five when my dad told me I'd die/I cried as he said, 'Son, there's nothing to be done'" — actually happened to him. "I was drawing in my dad's office

## "Trying for heaven *here* is what we're on Earth to do," Ebert says. "Not later."

and he was playing Beethoven really loud," Ebert says. "I remember it just hit me. I stopped drawing and I asked him if I was going to die. He's a therapist, so he was like, 'Well, yeah.' That was the saddest day I'd experienced up until then, and maybe even to this day."

Ebert spent an aimless year at Boston's Emerson College

before moving back to L.A., which is when he started writing songs — and his life went off the rails. "I was getting addicted to heroin, and I remember making the decision to just go for it," he says. "Something in me wanted that. It was the will to destroy myself and take control of the death process by being the main motivator of it."

By the early 2000s, he'd gotten clean and formed the band Ima Robot, which signed to Virgin Records. But Ebert felt like something was missing. "I became very rational and cold," he says. "I lost all of the magic." Then he met Jade Castrinos at a party — hers is the female voice you hear on most of the Zeros' songs. "Home" began as a demo they recorded that summer, a full year before the rest of the band was assembled. Although they were just friends when they demo'd the song, they eventually became a couple for a year and a half. (They remain bandmates and dear friends.)

The Zeros' L.A. roots run deep — in fact, it was a movie star, Ebert's friend Heath Ledger, who planned to release their first album on a label he

was founding. The Zeros were recording their debut when the actor died. "It was horrible," Ebert says. "I'd just talked to him the night before." The band went into the studio that day and recorded "Om Nashi Me," the triumphant closing track on *Up From Below*. "Heath had that attitude that anything that was impossible must be done," Ebert says. "Especially if it was impossible."

If *Up From Below* began as Ebert and Castrinos' private therapy sessions, *Here* was written with all 12 band members from the beginning. The lead single, "Man on Fire," is an exhortation to dance with the world. The Castrinos-led ballad "Fiya Wata" is about keeping in touch with friends and loved ones who have passed.

And for anyone who thinks Ebert and his band are just a bunch of space-case hippies? "If you're a rock star, you're not supposed to smile," Ebert says. "They can say the world is dog-eat-dog and you're childish and you're stupid, grow up. But it's not like you don't know the world is fucked up. What does being a realist accomplish? Survival? Survival? We are here to do more than survive."

NOTHING'S EVER BLACK AND WHITE.

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# RS PLAYLIST

OUR FAVORITE SONGS, ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW



## 1 BECK

### "I Just Started Hating Some People Today"

Remember funny Nineties Beck? (As opposed to bummed-out *Sea Change* Beck?) That dude is back!

Working with his buddy Jack White, Beck lays down a goofy, slide-fueled country stomp that's a sun-soaked taste of *Mellow Gold* grooviness. Yessss!

## 3 PAUL McCARTNEY

### *Thrillington*

In 1977, Macca released this awesomely oddball lounge-music version of *Ram* under a fake name (and for years denied he had made it). Hear it now on the new box set of his 1971 classic.



## 4 THE HIVES

### "1000 Answers"

More than a decade after helping spark the 2000s garage-rock explosion, these Swedes haven't forgotten how to write a killer hook. Exhibit A: This hopped-up blast from their fifth album, *Lex Hives*.

## 6 SLEIGH BELLS

### "Demons (Diplo Remix)"

How does Diplo make everything better? His latest Midas move: transforming his pop-metal pals' rager of a single into a robotic riot of rip-saw synths and R2D2-on-the-fritz bleeps.

## 2 BEYONCÉ

### "Ex-Factor" (YouTube)

Queen B is back – and how! During a run of post-baby shows in Atlantic City, she killed with this soul-shaking cover of Lauryn Hill's 1998 wailer.



## 5 BEACH HOUSE

### "Other People"

The Baltimore duo's new LP, *Bloom*, is packed with perfectly sunny daydreams. Our favorite is this crazy-catchy jam – spin it once and you'll be humming it all summer.



## 7 THE FAMILY BONES

### "If You Ever Need Someone" video

Singer Justin Webb, son of Jimmy, delivers a superlovely indie-pop tune and a sweet stop-motion video to match.

## 8 JAY-Z AND KANYE WEST

### "No Church in the Wild" video

Occupy your laptop with Jay and Ye's bombastic (if baffling) clip. It's like a G8 protest as imagined by Michael Bay – walls of fire, a stampeding elephant, tons of lasers. No one knows what it means, but it's provocative.



**Hear It Now!** Check out more must-hear music picks at [rollingstone.com/rsplaylist](http://rollingstone.com/rsplaylist).

# start your LEAP✓LIST

Before I

I want to:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

## ALL-NEW CR-V

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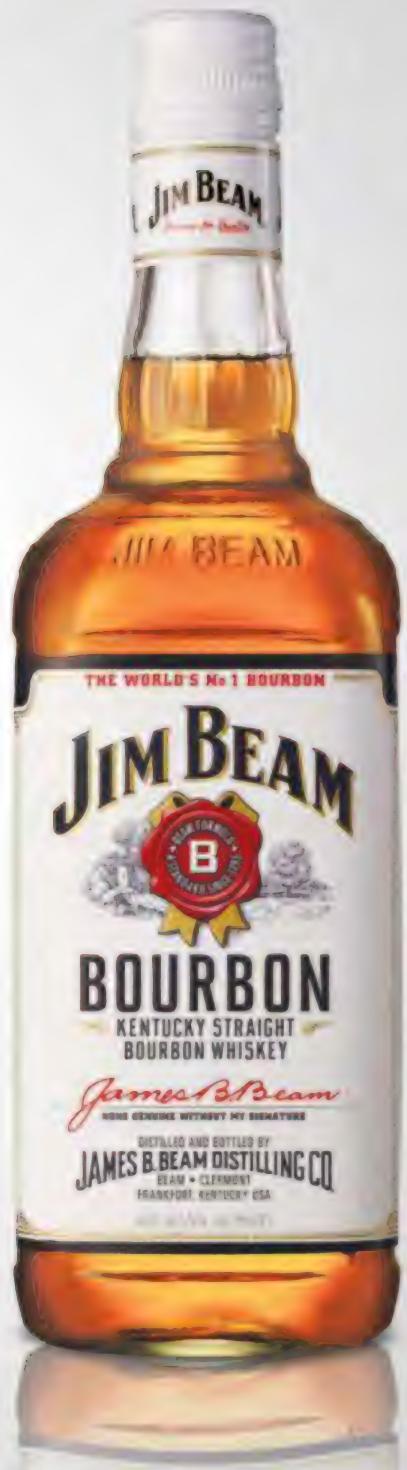
2WD EX-L model shown. ©2012 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

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"Every bar is a karaoke bar if you're a big enough dick." —Blink-182's Mark Hoppus

# Random Notes



White House  
incident: Dylan  
accepts the  
Medal of  
Freedom.

## Bob's Heavy Medal

At a ceremony in the White House's East Room, President Obama was stoked to salute Bob Dylan with our country's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom. "There is not a bigger giant in the history of American music," Obama said, as Dylan sat stone-faced in throwback sunglasses. "And I am a really big fan." Afterward, Dylan hung at a private cocktail reception, chatting with superfan Hillary Clinton.



**FACE TO FACE**  
Ronnie Wood  
and Rod  
Stewart  
demonstrated  
an old Faces  
greeting ritual  
in London.



**LIGHT MY FIRE**  
Muse rocked the  
Olympic torch  
through their  
U.K. hometown  
of Teignmouth.



**WHOLE LOTTA MICK**  
After killing on SNL,  
Mick Jagger rocked  
the afterparty with the  
Foo Fighters on "Miss  
You." Later, Amy  
Poehler and Dave  
Grohl nailed "Bad  
Reputation" (above).

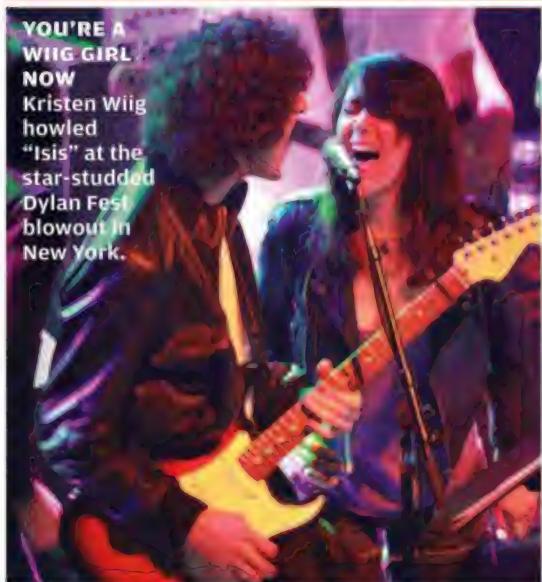


**THE WIND CRIES ANDRE**  
Andre 3000 debuted his  
faux 'fro while shooting  
the unauthorized Hendrix  
biopic *All Is by My Side*.



## The Bleach Boy

Who is the biggest metrosexual in One Direction? Harry Styles submitted to an intense teeth-whitening session while on tour, as bandmate Zayn Malik got himself a manicure. "Bit of manly pampering," Styles tweeted.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: STEVE THORPE/REDFERNS; GETTY IMAGES; LUIS GUERRERO/2012 RAMEY PHOTO; BRUNA/PACIFICCOASTNEWS.COM; TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES; ARM-GSI



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# The Original Sinner Returns

America's most delightfully dysfunctional family's prime-time comeback, plus Louis C.K., 'True Blood,' Aaron Sorkin's 'Newsroom' and more By Rob Sheffield

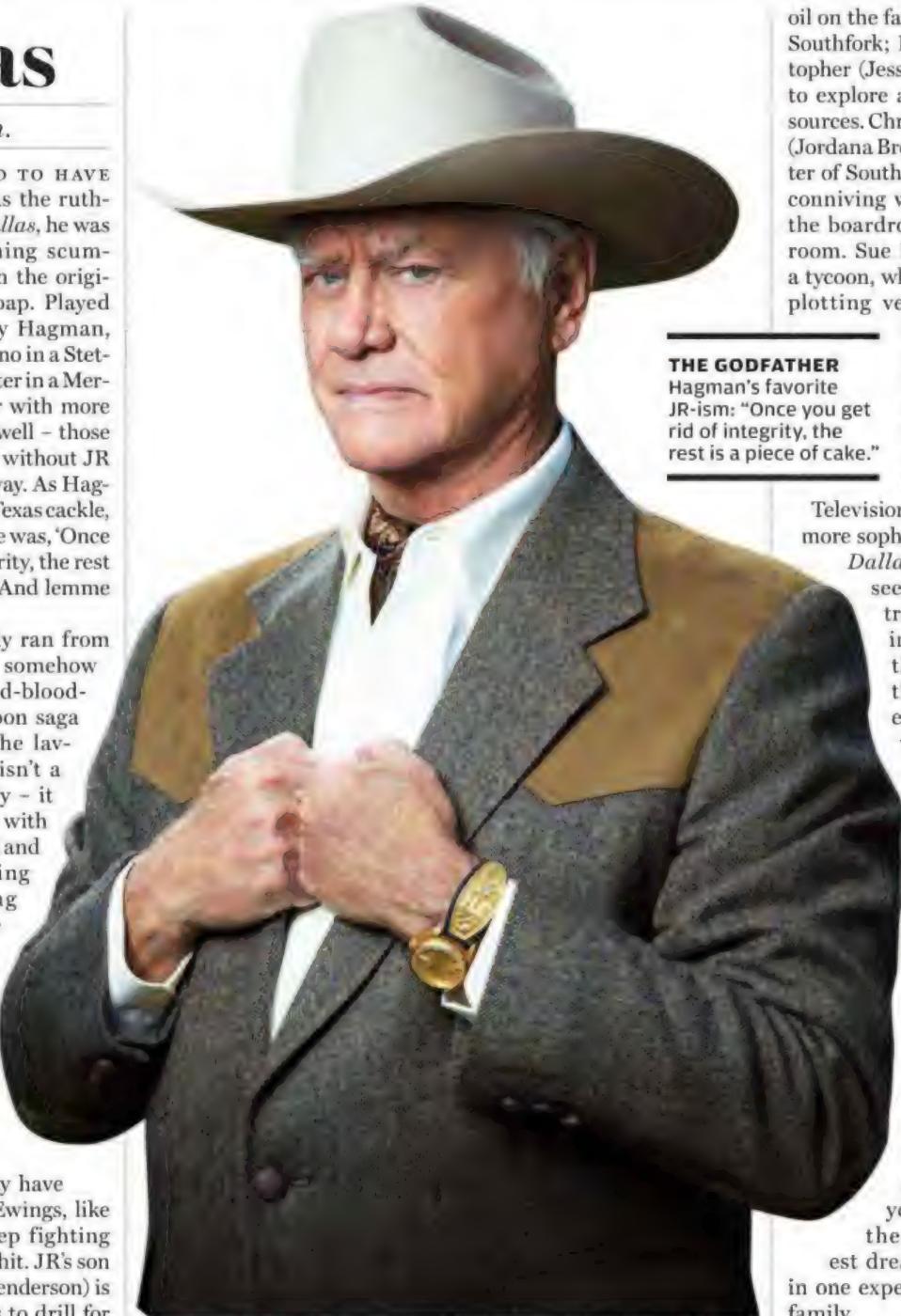
## Dallas

TNT 6/13, 9 p.m.

DAMN, IT'S GOOD TO HAVE JR Ewing back. As the ruthless oil baron of *Dallas*, he was the original dashing scumbag archvillain, on the original prime-time soap. Played by the great Larry Hagman, JR was Tony Soprano in a Stetson, Tyrion Lannister in a Mercedes, Don Draper with more notches on his oil well — those guys couldn't exist without JR to show them the way. As Hagman says, with his Texas cackle, "My favorite JR line was, 'Once you get rid of integrity, the rest is a piece of cake.' And lemme tell ya, it's true."

*Dallas* originally ran from 1978 to 1991, but somehow the Ewing sex-and-blood-and-oil-and-bourbon saga still resonates. The lavish TNT version isn't a reboot, fortunately — it picks up the story with characters both old and new, back-stabbing and bed-hopping through the Lone Star State. All three key Ewings are on hand: Patrick Duffy as idealistic brother Bobby, Linda Gray as JR's ex-wife Sue Ellen and Hagman as JR.

The fashion may have changed, but the Ewings, like the rest of us, keep fighting over the same old shit. JR's son John Ross (Josh Henderson) is a shark who wants to drill for



oil on the family homestead of Southfork; Bobby's son Christopher (Jesse Metcalfe) wants to explore alternative energy sources. Christopher's ex Elena (Jordana Brewster), the daughter of Southfork's cook, is now conniving with John Ross in the boardroom and the bedroom. Sue Ellen has become a tycoon, while JR is a recluse plotting vengeance against

**THE GODFATHER**  
Hagman's favorite JR-ism: "Once you get rid of integrity, the rest is a piece of cake."

Bobby over a bowl of red Jell-O. Have they learned a damn thing? Maybe not. But the rest of the country hasn't either.

Television has gotten much more sophisticated since the *Dallas* days, so it may seem heretical, contrarian or just plain insane to hail it as the most influential show of modern times. But if we're living in a golden age of TV, it's the Ewings' fault, because they invented the game everyone plays now. They proved it was possible to get away with stretching out the story week to week, throwing in preposterous cliffhangers and plot twists and power struggles. And they proved you could sum up the country's sickest dreams and flaws all in one expensively fucked-up family.

[Cont. on 34]

# CHARLIE SHEEN ANGER MANAGEMENT



A hostile makeover

A NEW COMEDY SERIES  
JUNE 28 · THURS 9

**FX**

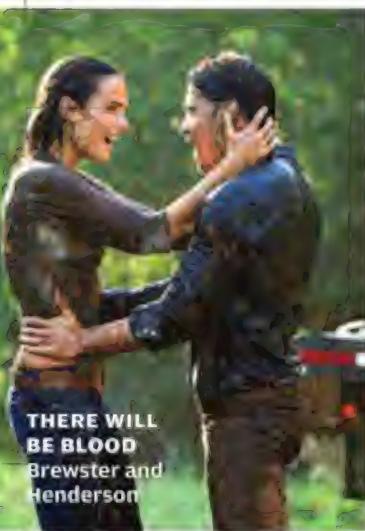
THERE IS NO BOX

## DALLAS

[Cont. from 32] That's why you can see the Ewings in clans from the Sopranos to the Kardashians. JR's approach to any problem was to "spread some B's" – booze, bucks, broads – and over 13 seasons they spread so many B's around that television would never be the same. As Duffy says, "The Ewings are all about oil the way *Mad Men* is all about advertising. They come from this particular business world, but what matters is the relationships."

"I haven't seen *Mad Men*," Hagman says. "I don't watch a lot of television, but *The Sopranos* I did watch, and it was brilliantly done. By God, that was great. It was definitely along the same lines of *Dallas*. Except the people were not particularly attractive. That wasn't a problem for us."

*Dallas* is still old-school at heart, but it reflects how times have changed, especially for its heroines. "Sue Ellen was the original desperate housewife," Gray says proudly. "But this time around, Sue Ellen's got more money than JR, and I love it."



THERE WILL BE BLOOD  
Brewster and Henderson

And even in his golden years, JR is still the sick bastard he should always be. As Hagman recalls, "There was a bar that used to show *Dallas* every Friday night, and, of course, every episode used to end with a close-up of my shit-eating grin. The bar had a lottery, and the winner got the prize of throwing a beer bottle at the screen, right through my face. I thought that was an honor."

# LUCKY LOUIS

The funniest man on TV, Louis C.K., on the new season, 'Girls' and taking his mother's advice **By Jonah Weiner**

*2011 was your biggest year, and "Louie" became a certified hit. Does success figure as a theme in the new season?*

On the show, careerwise, I'm always five years behind the real me. But there is a pretty big story line later in the season that involves trying to step up. I've been in a holding pattern on the show for the first two years. I'm a lot more ambitious than the character is. But he'll be sort of pushed into trying to go somewhere further.

*What are you exploring this time out?*

The last two seasons I've written the show just roaming around the city, coming up with ideas as I go along. This season was very different, because I wrote the whole thing before I shot it. So there's some stories that take longer than one episode to tell. There's a lot of dialogue. And we've wrecked four cars. I like being on set when we destroy things!

*With Dan Harmon getting fired from "Community," and "30 Rock" getting only 13 episodes for its final season, why do you think these smart, critically adored comedies are having such a tough time?*

I don't know. I saw that show *Girls*, and that seems really promising. I'm happy to see that edge. I don't think that climate ever totally changes. There's always something out that's really supercool, and then there's always something that's huge, broad and making a fortune.

*You tweeted a bunch of compliments to Lena Dunham, the creator of "Girls." Why did you feel the need to "keep going"?*

I was flipping around, and I landed on the show, and I really loved it. I was surprised by everything that was said. I just dug it. So I was just happy for her, and I'd heard that there was a negative feeling around it, and I thought, "Oh, fuck those people!"

*When you pulled out of hosting the Radio & TV Correspondents' Dinner this*

*spring, people assumed it's because conservatives were giving you grief over making fun of Sarah Palin's "retard-making cunt." Was that the reason?*

I just was looking up in the sky and saying, "Hey, let's bring lunch indoors." I honestly didn't pay much attention to what people were saying, but I was talking to my mom one morning and realizing that there was some shit stirring about my presence at that thing. And then I realized this is going to be a distraction. I said to my mom, "Hey, what if I just fucking cancel right now, and just forget about this whole thing?" And she said, "Do it! Please!" So it was an easy decision to make. I'm about making stuff, not about talking about it to other people.

*What's on the horizon past this season?*

I've got some stuff coming out on the website. I just put out a new album, and I'm going to put out an old movie I made. Then I've got a big stand-up tour this fall, and it'll be all-new material. The tickets will be sold on my website – we're trying to do something like what we did with last year's special.

*A photo recently circulated online of you standing with William Hung. You look thinner – have you lost weight?*

Oh, that was a long time ago. I guess I was in better shape then. I haven't improved much recently. I gotta get in better shape just so that I don't die. But, yeah, I have a picture of me with William Hung and one with me and Hillary Clinton. So, pretty good!

**FX 6/28, 10:30 p.m.**



# WILFRED

THE STORY OF A DOG AND HIS MAN.



JUNE 28  
THURS. 10  
**FX**  
THERE IS NO BOX

#WilfredFX



## True Blood

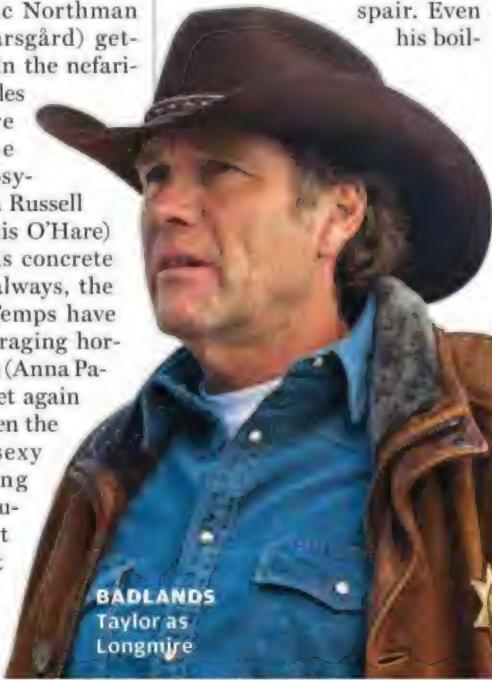
HBO 6/10, 9 p.m.

THE FIFTH SEASON OF "TRUE Blood" turns down the cute, and not a minute too soon. The Louisiana vampire crew definitely got a little lost in fairyland last season, and after all the fancifully fluffy fairy exploits, the new episodes are a toothsome return to form. It's almost like Alan Ball, for his last go-round as showrunner, took the success of *Game of Thrones* as a personal challenge – it was time to remind everyone who invented this whole Sunday-night breasts-and-bloodbaths combo-platter shit. So the story has toughened up again, with bloodsucking studs Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer) and Eric Northman (Alexander Skarsgård) getting caught up in the nefarious power struggles of the Vampire Authority. The much-missed psychopathic villain Russell Edgington (Denis O'Hare) returns from his concrete grave. And as always, the ladies of Bon Temps have swamploads of raging hormones, as Sookie (Anna Paquin) wrestles yet again to choose between the supernatural sexy beasts panting to get into her boudoir. The smart money might be on the were-wolf, but never bet against a vampire.

## Longmire

A&E 6/3, 10 p.m.

"BATTLESTAR GALACTICA" fans might cream their fracking jeans at the very idea of Starbuck (Katee Sackhoff) as a cowgirl cop toting a gun and tracking down perps way out West in the snowy wilds of Wyoming. But *Longmire* is solid all the way around, with Robert Taylor (not the classic Hollywood star – an Australian with the same name) as a stoic sheriff in a cowboy hat in Absaroka County. A year after his wife's death, Sheriff Walt Longmire obsesses over his job to keep from feeling anything else – he walks and talks with an authentically dark sense of bottled-up despair. Even his boil-



erplate grumpy-cop banter is full of tension, like when he falls silent at a crime scene and Sackhoff asks what he's doing. "Thinkin'," he mumbles. "I do that sometimes before I talk." You get the idea he used that line plenty on his wife while she was around, and it didn't work on her, either. He might seem like a familiar breed of basic-cable cop – a blue-collar hero, behind his gruff demeanor, fighting to keep his job and his ideas – but *Longmire* is impressively devoid of corn.

## Falling Skies

TNT 6/17, 9 p.m.

DIDN'T YOU LEARN YOUR lesson last summer, pesky alien invaders? Mess with planet Earth, you mess with Noah Wyle! The unlikeliest of action heroes returns as the mild-mannered professor who turns into an Earth-defending guerrilla warrior. This big-budget Spielberg-spawn romp was a mixed bag the first time around. All the family growth-and-learning interludes got tiresome, but what should keep the new season compelling is the political jousting of the human militia – not to mention all those gnarly skitter-blasting combat scenes.

## Cajun Pawn Stars

HISTORY 6/6, 10 p.m.

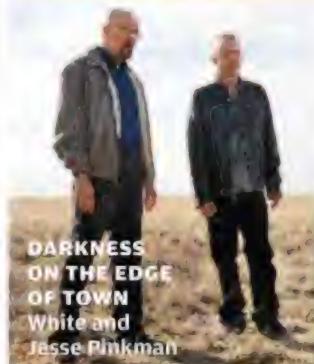
THAT'S RIGHT – NEW EPISODES of the zeitgeist-shagging reality series, following the luckless clientele who drag

## BREAKING BAD'S LONG GOODBYE

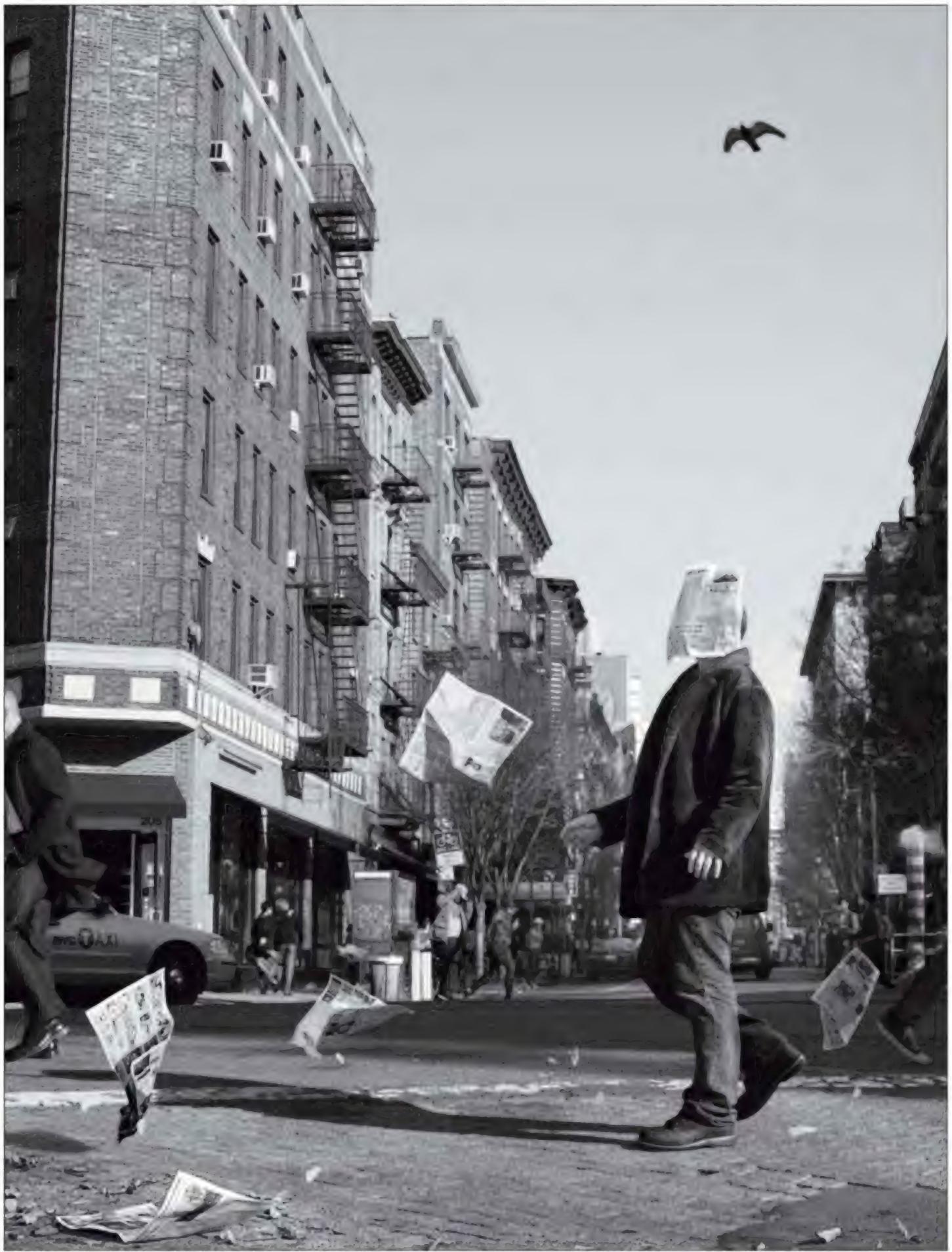
The anxiety and dread reach new highs as Walter White and Co. begin their farewell tour

AMC 7/15, 10 p.m.

*Breaking Bad* most certainly went out in style last year. Walter White pulled off the goriest coup of his criminal career by rubbing out drug kingpin Gus Fring, blowing him up in (of all places) a nursing home – with a wheelchair kamikaze bomb. After the blast, Gus straightened his



tie one last time, right before his head crumbled apart. But as usual, by solving one big problem, Walter has just cooked himself up a fresh batch of bigger ones. So any *Breaking Bad* fan has to look forward to the final season with a blue-sky crystal buzz of anticipation. What is up with the sinister-looking lily of the valley plants in Walter's yard? What will we find out about his possible role in poisoning the son of Jesse's girlfriend? More to the point, how would Jesse react to any hint that Walt might have poisoned Brock to goad him into the Gus murder conspiracy? How long can Skyler keep a lid on his secret life? And with Hank getting as desperately crazy as Jesse, how many loose cannons can Walt afford to keep around? One thing is for sure: Walter is so proud of himself for getting Gus out of the way that he feels more invincible than ever. Which means he's more dangerous – and in bigger danger – than ever. From Walter White, "I won" are the scariest words you could hear.



**LOUIE**™ MISERY LOVES COMEDY

JUNE 28 • THURS 10:30

**FX**  
THERE IS NO BICK\*

## SUMMER CABLE PREVIEW

their household debris and their broken dreams to Silver Dollar Pawn & Jewelry Center in rural Louisiana. You have to give *Cajun Pawn Stars* credit for combining the local flavor of *Swamp People* with all those other consignment-shop shows. But sorry, dude – no way is that World War I periscope rifle going to make bank.

### Web Therapy

SHOWTIME 7/2, 11 p.m.

IT MIGHT SEEM STRANGE, given that there's probably a *Friends* rerun on somewhere near you right this second, and given how fondly people recall *The Comeback*, but *Web Therapy* might be Lisa Kudrow's finest hour. In the second season of the show, spun off from the online series, she splutters and twitches as Fiona Wallice, the therapist who uses the Internet to avoid any meaningful human contact – you know, the same way the rest of us use it. She flits her way through improvised iChat therapy sessions with the most illustrious all-star team of guest-star patients since *Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist*. Except Kudrow makes Dr. Katz look like Dr. Drew – she's so self-involved, so virtuous at guiding any conversation back to herself, no matter what



problems she hears about from Conan O'Brien, Meryl Streep, Rosie O'Donnell and the rest of the patients who end up on her virtual couch. She even meets her old *Friends* mate David Schwimmer, although poor Matt LeBlanc remains trapped in the still-wretched *Episodes*. With Victor Garber as her long-burned-out husband, Kudrow comes on as a shrink who's even more clueless than yours.

### Barter Kings

A&E 6/12, 9 p.m.

EVERY TIME YOU THINK reality TV has upped the ante

for downscale capitalist antics, the downscale gets downer. So *Barter Kings* aims to trump the likes of *Hardcore Pawn* and *Storage Wars* by going all the way cash-free. No money changing hands at all, just crafty scavengers who trade up fancy junk they don't want for fancier junk they want. For a true barter master, you can start with an Elvis record and keep trading up to a speedboat.

### Political Animals

USA 7/15, 10 p.m.

WHO'D WIN IN A FIGHT: Sigourney Weaver as the sec-

retary of state, or Julia Louis-Dreyfus as the veep? In a White House cage match, you have to like Sigourney's chances. Weaver plays the Cabinet secretary who's also the former First Lady, divorced from ex-president Ciarán Hinds. The cast is first-rate, especially with Ellen Burstyn and Carla Gugino. It's a bold move for the USA Network, breaking with its successful formula of *Royal Pains*-style yuppie-stud dramas for a six-part miniseries that's far more ambitious, and Sigourney-er.

### Keeping Up With the Kardashians

E! Sundays, 9 p.m.

DO YOU EVER HAVE that nagging worry that a week might whisk by without a Kardashian-themed series? And you might therefore fail in your duty to, you know, keep up with these zany ladies? Fear not! God never closes a *Kourtney & Kim Take New York*-size door without opening a *Khloé & Lamar*-shape window. As *Keeping Up* returns for a seventh season, Mama Kris schmoozes with Babyface. (If they make a golden-shower video, would they call it *Waiting to Exhale?*) And Kim copes with her divorce by donning a blond wig – which means even she's sick of Kim Kardashian.



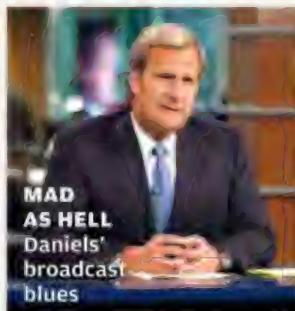
## SUMMER'S BEST NEW SHOW

Aaron Sorkin takes on the media again – but this time he gets it right

### The Newsroom

HBO 6/24, 10 p.m.

AARON SORKIN ALWAYS sounds like Aaron Sorkin, whether he's on his game (*The West Wing*) or nowhere near the end zone (*Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*). But he's definitely on in the rapid-fire dialogue-overload barrage of *The Newsroom*. Jeff Daniels is the jaded news anchor who's been playing the nonpartisan game too long, until he finally flames out in a public rant about the debased political media, questioning whether America is the greatest country in the world and fuming, "If liberals are so fuck-



in' smart, how come they lose so goddamn always?" When his newsroom rebels, he yells, "I'm a perfectly nice guy, and I have focus-group data to prove it!"

Can he rediscover his hunger to start reporting hard news again? Can he inspire his plucky young team of sex-

starved newshounds? Can he make amends with the old flame (Emily Mortimer) who's his new executive producer? And will anyone shut up for a second? These are all easy questions, with Sorkin running wild, but it all works. Daniels, such a ham in the Eighties, has been on a roll ever since *The Squid and the Whale*. He rocks the most hilariously awful midlife-crisis leather jacket in TV history – the fact that he wears that thing to the office is all you need to know about how hard he's trying. Scene-stealer: Sam Waterston as his drunk of a network boss, who pours him some whiskey and says, "God, you're such a pussy."

### Bristol Palin: Life's a Tripp

LIFETIME 6/19, 10 p.m.

Hey, your life could suck a lot worse. You could have a right-wing politician mom who only lets you off the leash when she pimps you out to a different shitty reality show every goddamn summer. And you could land on a network that thinks it's a hoot to make fun of your lysergically-named baby. Nice title, Lifetime, but there aren't enough drugs on the planet to get anyone high enough to watch this.

# LATE NIGHT REBRANDED

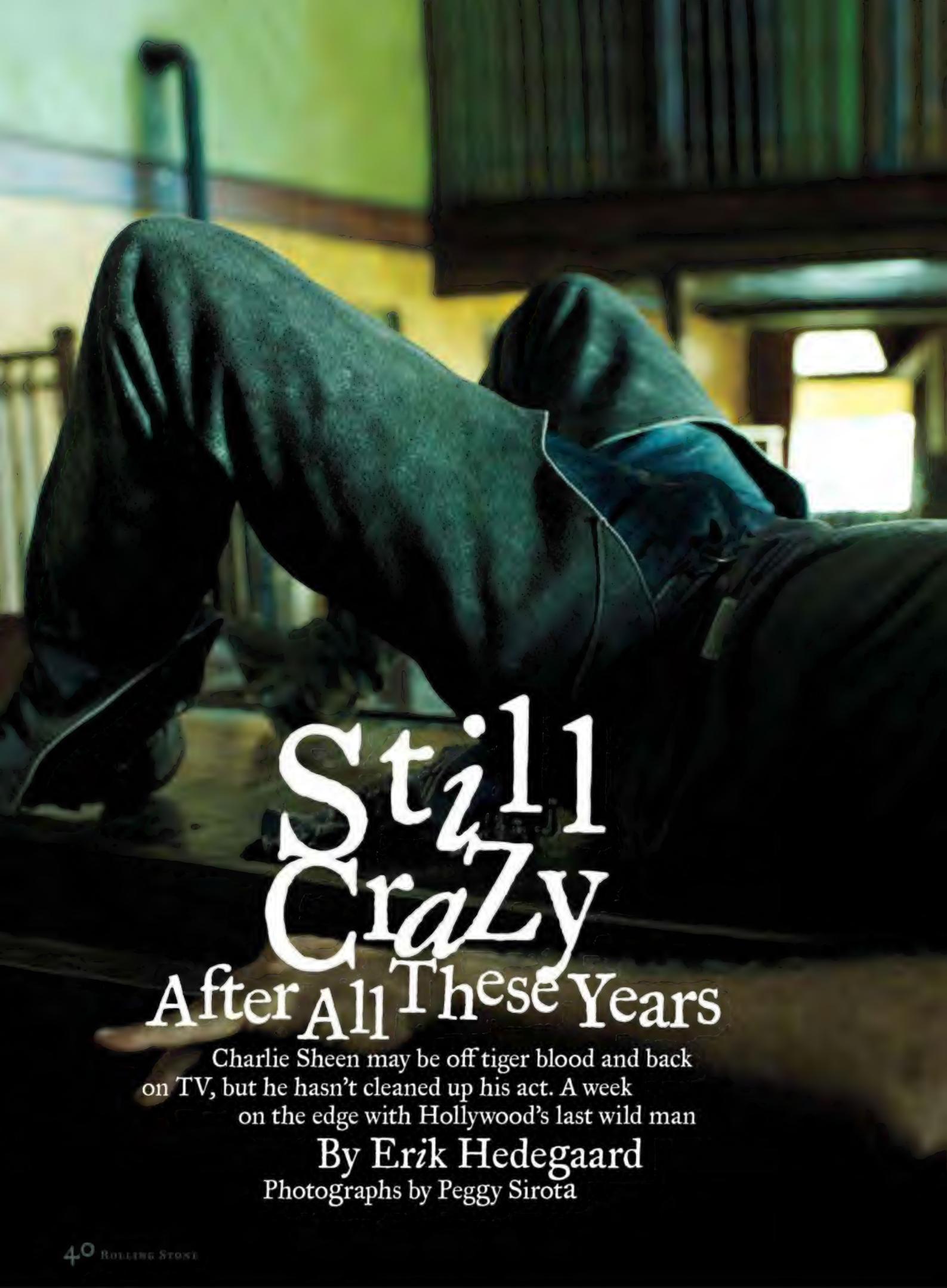


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# Still Crazy After All These Years

Charlie Sheen may be off tiger blood and back on TV, but he hasn't cleaned up his act. A week on the edge with Hollywood's last wild man

By Erik Hedegaard

Photographs by Peggy Sirota



**C**

HARLIE SHEEN CAN GET IN MORE HOT water in more ways than just about anyone ever. In the past year or so alone, he's – well, no doubt you already know all about it: the rants against his former boss, *Two and a Half Men* creator Chuck Lorre ("that low-rent, nutless sociopath"), the parading around of his live-in so-called goddesses (one, a porn star, the other, a former nanny), the court-ordered removal of his kids from his house, the lunatic verbiage ("Vatican assassin warlocks," "tiger blood," "winning!" "banging seven-gram rocks"), the \$100 million breach-of-contract lawsuit filed against Warner Bros. and Lorre, the entities behind *Men*, which earned him \$25 million, with more on the way, the My Violent Torpedo of Truth/Defeat Is Not an Option Tour (turned out defeat was an option, though; it kind of sucked), and so on. Last June, he finally exhausted himself and went silent, surfacing only to take the occasional swipe at *Men* and to exit a Guns N' Roses concert looking boozy if not bombed. In other words, recently, he's been a very good boy indeed.

But now, tonight, right at this very moment, he is courting trouble once more. He's out at a clubby Hollywood steakhouse called Boa, happily working his way through the charred-tuna tartare. A twentysomething girl has come over and presented herself. She says her name is Erica and that she just tried out for the role of his 15-year-old daughter on *Anger Management*, his new show on FX, but was turned down. She pouts. Dark hair, short skirt, really tight blouse, she looks scrumptious when she pouts. She turns sideways a little, showing herself off in profile. "They were like, 'You nailed it, but your body doesn't match a 15-year-old's.'"

Charlie, 46, leans out, wipes his lips with his napkin, and says, "Well, I'm no physiology expert, but I have to support them on that."

And then, just like that, it's on. Pretty soon, they're shuffling around the outside patio, smoking cigarettes. Pretty soon, Charlie is saying, "Are you married, engaged? How is it that you and I have not met up until this moment? How do we let this not be the last time we ever see each other?" Pretty soon, Charlie has her digits in his cellphone. It's really quite spectacular how it happens. Charlie's eyes are all lit up and sparkly. He's forward without being aggressive. The gravel in his voice makes it sound like a barroom brawl, but his vibe is easygoing, warm, friendly, fun. What's not to like?

"That's one of the prettiest girls I've seen in a long time – sit-down-and-weep pretty," he says later on, overflowing with poetic emotion. "Someone like her should

only exist on a Sunday. Did you see the tons of cute piled on top of her beauty? Man, I've got to get out more! That was fucking sexy as hell, man." Sitting back, he goes on, "People think that a girl comes up and I'd be like, 'Yeah, whatever.' No, I'm like a nine-year-old sitting here with his buddy, going, 'Oh, my God!' That's the Charlie Sheen nobody knows. I'm not this fucking weirdo. I don't create havoc, mayhem, wreckage. I mean, I did for a while. But it was never part of the master plan. I was just trying to keep shit propped up while it was crumbling."

A while later, he texts Erica, suggesting they get together soon, but, in fact, she is not destined to become tonight's problem. Nor are the three or four shots of tequila that Charlie downs so easily.

Instead, tonight, it's one of the gold teeth inside Charlie's mouth – specifically, the number 12 tooth, upper left, a pre-molar that snapped off on a potato chip and was replaced with gold. Ridiculous as it sounds, FX has demanded that any time Charlie steps out in public, that gold tooth needs to be camouflaged with paint. Seems they don't like the way it makes Charlie look. Seems they think it makes him look ghetto. He sighs. "A year ago, I would have been like, 'Fuck you, it's my tooth!' But why be the dick? What's the point? To show them? Show them what? Anyway, it's become this whole big deal, so now I'm like, 'OK, you're entitled.'"

**"I'm not this weirdo. I don't create havoc. I mean, I did for a while, but it was never the master plan."**

But, of course, Charlie being Charlie, that tooth isn't painted tonight, and when he smiles, it's flashy and Fort Knox brilliant, and there sure are lots of paparazzi out front, just waiting for him to make an appearance. He takes a moment. He takes a breath. It could be worse. He could be in jail, or (allegedly) wrestling some girl around in the Plaza Hotel, or flinging dollars at a stripper. Much worse. "I forgot to paint my tooth, that's all," he says. And yet he really does want to toe the line. So off he sails, out the back door, into a waiting car, avoiding the photographers, avoiding conflict, showing off a more mature side of himself, the Charlie Sheen nobody knows, trying to get things right for almost the first time ever in his life, if only he can.

**I**T'S BEEN A WILD RIDE PRETTY much from day one: He was born to Janet and Martin Sheen, on September 3rd, 1965, in a New York hospital, and had just crested, wasn't even out of the birth canal yet, when the first issue arose. The doctor, Irwin Chabon, noticed that the umbilical cord was pressed up against Charlie's nose, suffocating him. "Hold!" yelled Chabon, and Janet stopped pushing, which gave him time to cut the cord. "Now!" he yelled, and Janet pushed like hell. "And out Charlie came flying, and he was blue, a blue baby," recalls Martin, who was then a young unknown actor. "There was not a sound coming from him, not a breath, nothing. He was just limp." Dr. Chabon grabbed the baby by the feet and held him up and began swatting him. Janet said, "What's wrong?" Martin said, "Doesn't look good, kid." He thought Charlie was going to die and asked for him to be baptized. But then, says Martin, "Chabon hauled off and hit Charlie once again and Charlie started screaming, and he hasn't stopped since."

Nineteen years later, he got his first co-starring movie role, in the 1984 teenagers-battling-commies flick *Red Dawn*, and followed that up two years later playing a slacker-hoodlum-type make-out artist in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, typecast for the first time, to considerable comedic effect. But he really didn't step out in a big way until Oliver Stone cast him in two of the decade's most incendiary films: as a bewildered gung-ho young grunt in Vietnam, in 1986's Oscar-winning *Platoon*, and as Gordon Gekko's ambitious greed-is-good protégé in 1987's *Wall Street*. The reviews were glowing, the movies were important, he was all set to star in a third Stone movie, he was going places.

But things went off-kilter rather quickly. First, Stone unceremoniously jilted him for Tom Cruise to play the lead in *Born on the Fourth of July*, and Charlie's subsequent movie choices – comedies like *Major League* and *Hot Shots!*, and action

Contributing editor ERIK HEDEGAARD profiled Will Ferrell in RS 1152.



flicks like *Navy Seals* – did nothing to bolster his rep as a serious actor, although many of them, especially those involving baseball, which is one of his big passions, were quite good. And then there was his personal life. By this time, three years into his career, his reputation as a party animal had already been well established. He whizzed around in a \$60,000 black Porsche; he carried a sheet of paper with names of women on it, listed one through 25, some given stars like a movie review, others annotated with words like “breasts,” “Jacuzzi” and “cheerleader”; he owned a bunch of guns and loved nothing better than shooting them off into the ocean; and he thought about money a lot,

**SINNING AND WINNING** “For, like, a two-week period,” Sheen says, “I was the most famous person on the planet.”

having concluded, as he said in 1987, that “money is energy, man. It moves things.”

It was loopy stuff even by Hollywood standards. And it only got worse. In 1990, then-fiance Kelly Preston picked up a pair of his pants in their bathroom and out fell a tiny .22 revolver, which hit the floor and blasted a bullet into the toilet, ricochetting a piece of porcelain shrapnel into her arm; the way the story played out in public, however, Charlie shot Preston in the arm and that’s why she soon left him and married John Travolta. A few years later, while

going out with model Donna Peele, Charlie took the witness stand in the trial of Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss, admitted to being a huge fan, having spent \$53,000 on her services. Even so, Peele married him shortly thereafter, forming a union that lasted less than a year. “You buy a bad car, it breaks down,” Charlie said at the time. By 1998, his career had tanked and all he could do was wax philosophic: “What do you do when you’ve got studio heads that won’t hire you, even though you screwed the same whores? Yet they pull you aside at a party and say that you’re their hero for the things that you do?” That same year, he overdosed on cocaine, was hospitalized, entered rehab. “Pray for Charlie, pray for my boy. He has appetites that get him into trouble, but he has a good heart,” his father said.

“When Charlie’s sober, he’s sweet, kind, loving, generous,” said porn star and former girlfriend Ginger Lynn. “When he’s drinking and using, he’s out of control.”

In 2000, however, he turned his career around, replacing the increasingly infirm Michael J. Fox in TV’s *Spin City* for two seasons and making it an even bigger hit than it already was, and following that up, starting in 2003, with *Two and a Half Men* – playing Charlie Harper, a version of himself, never seen without a bowling shirt on his back, booze on his breath and a loose woman in his bed – which went on to earn him a record-setting \$2 million an episode. And now, he’s attempting to come back once again, in *Anger Management*. It’s based on the 2003 Adam Sandler/Jack Nicholson movie pretty much in name only and has Charlie playing a former baseball player whose own anger issues lead him to become a therapist. If *Anger Management* wins an audience, however, it’ll most likely be due not to the quality of the show but to the immense appeal and charm of Charlie on the small screen. As *Men* has proved, no Charlie, no funny, whether replacement Ashton Kutcher gets signed for another (dismal) year or not.

But during all this time, not once has Charlie ever managed to get a conventional grip on his personal life. The result has been various stints in rehab, along with two more failed marriages (to Denise Richards, 2002-2005, and actress Brooke Mueller, 2008-2010), numerous run-ins with the law, warlocks putting hexes on him and the nutty rest of it. Still, it’s pretty quiet in Charlie-town these days. He spends most of his time working on the show, which he has an unusually large vested interest in seeing succeed; his up-front salary might not be *Men*-size, but he has equity participation, and should things go well – if the initial run of 10 episodes reaches a certain ratings level, FX is obligated to buy another 90 episodes, ensuring syndication – then he stands to earn up to \$200 million over time, which is one great big bunch of thing-moving energy, man.

At the moment, though, he's hanging around his home, smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and trying to explain the whys and wherefores of last year's Biggest Charlie Sheen Meltdown of All Time. His place is done up in the modern style, very clean, very quiet, very tasteful. He's got a few of his baseball collectibles on display, along with a samurai sword, an imposing Meade LX200-ACF telescope, a large old-timey jukebox and a great big painting of his dad and Marlon Brando, in *Apocalypse Now*, the background screaming-pain red and hellish. No clutter anywhere, except for on the refrigerator doors. Stuck to them are numerous pictures of his kids, along with bagged-and-tagged mementos from various nights out on the town: a cigar half smoked by Ray Lewis, an empty cigarette pack from Sean Penn, a Sharpie that Russell Brand used to sign autographs.

Outside, on the patio, looking out toward the pool, Charlie lights up another Marlboro Red ("I do 40 a day - no, 30") and holds forth as he does, in the most amusing of ways, with his growl of a voice. First order of business, of course, is Chuck Lorre, the proximate cause of the meltdown. "I can't help myself with this guy, sorry," Charlie says, looking like he doesn't really want to help himself anyway. "He's a turd. A turd! The good news is, he's no longer stuck to my shoe." Charlie's main beef with Lorre (and he has bazillions of them) was Lorre's refusal to write more episodes when, surprise, surprise, Charlie finished a show-mandated 2011 stint in rehab earlier than expected (it was done at home, which Denise Richards nicknamed Sober Valley Lodge, in a record two weeks). Lorre's decision not only cost Charlie a bundle of money but also the rest of *Men*'s cast and crew. So, Charlie went off. But nothing has explained what fueled Charlie to go off the way he did, carpet-bomb style. Everyone thinks drugs, due to his long history of drug abuse, primarily with cocaine, "bangin' seven-gram rocks, because that's how I roll," and the like. But he insists no drugs were ingested; he took several drug tests during that time, all of which came back negative. "Charlie smoked cigarettes like a chimney, but other than that, no drinking and no drugs," says porn actress and former Sheen goddess Bree Olson. "He was just pissed off. And not afraid to show it."

"I am on a drug," he told ABC's Andrea Canning. "It's called Charlie Sheen. It's not available because if you try it once, you will die. Your face will melt off, and your children will weep over your exploded body."

Bipolar disorder was the next most common explanation, but Charlie wasn't having any of that, either. "Wow! What's that mean? Wow. And then what? What's the cure? Medicine? Make me like them? Not gonna happen. I'm bi-winning. If I'm bipolar, aren't there moments where a guy crashes in a corner, like, 'Oh, my



God, it's all my mom's fault?  
Shut up. Shut up! Stop! Move forward."

So, if not drugs or mental illness, what was it?

Taking a stab at it, Charlie says, "I don't think it was just the show. It was too much people-pleasing, not enough breaks, over 30 years, forming into one focused tsunami-like release," and then he kind of tosses his arms up in the air and sighs.

"I haven't gone through a psych evaluation to see what was behind the whole episode," he goes on, "but for, like, a two-week period in there, I was the most famous person on the planet! Here's why I think it had such resonance and crazy cosmic traction. It wasn't 'win' or 'won.' It was 'winning' - the middle of an act. Clearly, a guy gets fired, his relationships are in the toilet, he's off on some fucking tour, there's nothing 'winning' about any of that. I mean, how does a guy who's obviously quicksanded, how does he consider any of it a victory? I was in total denial. 'We're winning.' Kooky shit."

He stops, thinks about that, maybe hoping his thoughts on the matter will clarify themselves. After a while, when they don't, he says, "Oh, man, what is my life? I don't even know, dude. Here's the good news. It was exciting as hell, being on the apex of that wave as it was cresting. Exhilarating. But, yeah, it feels like certain ripples have reached their shores." Pause. "Whatever the hell that means."

And there he lets his explanation, such as it is, rest. He can do no better. Truly, he's as perplexed as anyone. "I look back at tapes of me live and I don't know where it

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

Above: Charlie in 1977 at age 11 with dad Martin Sheen in the Philippines during the filming of *Apocalypse Now*. Left: Playing baseball at Malibu Park Junior High.

all came from," he says. "It's very bizarre. It's like one giant, long poem, played by some weird character, about things that aren't totally grounded in anything real."

Perhaps not, but what the episode owes a lot to, in a way that will always be particular to Charlie, is his love of two movies, *Apocalypse Now*, starring his father, and *Jaws*, starring a great big goddamn shark. He's seen both of them well over 150 times. He's obsessed with them. He knows them by heart - "line for line, word for word, and he's still watching them constantly, to this day," says Olson. And it's from great moments in those films that many of his seemingly out-of-nowhere Sheen-isms are derived: from *Apocalypse*, for example, the "tiger blood" and "warlock" riffs; and from *Jaws*, the "torpedo of truth" business. And maybe it's the influence of both those movies together that led him to take on Lorre, a puny Kurtz figure at best but with certain monomaniacal tendencies, and the CBS/Warner Bros. cabal, shark-toothed, with a gaping, devouring maw, the way he did, brandishing the only weapons he had, his ramped-up verbal skills and his straight-out-of-the-movies willingness to do whatever it takes to kill the much-bigger, much-stronger enemy, his own fate be damned.

Or something like that. But the point is, in this light, his actions, though perhaps ill-advised, can only be considered heroic. And throughout, he never made excuses for what he was doing or hid behind obfuscations, which is one of the great things about the guy and why people like him so much and continue to root for him.

"He's an extraordinary man but deeply flawed, as we all are," says his father. "I'll tell you one thing about him, though. He's never once lied his way out of a situation. He takes the rap. He's done that all his life. His honesty is breathtaking."

Indeed, it can be. Right now, for instance, he's off the wagon and making no bones about it. "I mean, the shit works. Sorry, but it works. Anyway, I don't see what's wrong with a few drinks. What's your drink? Tequila? Mine's vodka. Straight, because I've always said that ice is for injuries, ha ha." And so into the home bar he walks, actually going for some tequila tonight, a bottle of Don Ramón Platinum, lining up a shot, downing it with a Coke chaser, but not before saying, "Here's to us and those like us," a traditional warrior's toast, most often said when looking back upon battles past, which makes it perfect for Charlie, at this point in time.

He spent his teenage years living in Malibu and attended Santa Monica High, where he was a standout pitcher and made Super-8 movies with his brother Emilio, Sean Penn and Rob Lowe, among others. They were older than him, however, so when they turned to acting and became known as the Brat Pack, all he could do was watch from the sidelines. "I was so jealous, I wanted to kill myself," he says. "They got all the girls, all the free meals, all the dope, all the perks, all of it. I said to myself, 'I'm going to eclipse all of them.' I was driven to have what they had, except more, and more consistently."

His parents bought him a BMW when he was around 16, and that, along with his natural inclinations, opened up a whole world of trouble. He once got stoned in the car and fell asleep, only to be woken by a cop who soon found all of Charlie's dope, pipes and rolling papers, plus a knife he carried in an ankle holster, plus some beauty of an ivory-inlaid billy club; only his mother's friendship with a judge saved him from stir. A year later, he got himself arrested for credit-card fraud. His senior year, he got so pissed off at a teacher that he balled up a pile of paper and "fired a strike in the middle of her forehead...and

to a seven-year-old. I remember thinking, 'We're going to die. These guys are going to kill us.'" He started having panic attacks and then, one day, he found himself stuttering. "It was fucking awful. Picture this: In school, they call on you, and out of nowhere - I just stopped answering. I knew all the answers, but I stopped raising my hand. I got real quiet for the longest time."

And then the stutter went away and he got real loud with his life again. And he has been real loud like that for the longest time, with no end in sight. "I've got 14,000 days left, and I'm gonna enjoy them all," he likes to say. "Hey, man, I didn't know there was any other way to live!" That being the case, he has consumed every enjoyable there is to consume: a ton of pills, a ton of booze, a ton of coke ("The run I was on made Sinatra, Flynn, Jagger, Richards look like droopy-eyed armless children," he said after one binge), cars, guns, wristwatches, many flavors of jam (currently on display: marmalade, prickly pear, peach, ginger, boysenberry), coffee that drips from a single-serving machine and has to be spiked with an extra spoonful of Chock full o'Nuts instant, baseball memorabilia, art, lottery tickets (buying \$4,000 worth a week) - you name it, high and low,

## "It's about being the last guy alive," Charlie says. "Everybody else has crawled to cover, and I'm there saying, 'Come on, the party's not over!'"

**F**IVE DAYS AFTER CHARLIE was born, and while he was still black and blue from all of Irwin Chabon's whacking, Martin and Janet took him and his two brothers, Emilio and Ramon, on the road while Martin toured with a play called *The Subject Is Roses*. Charlie, whose middle name is Irwin, after the doctor who saved his life, spent his first nine months like that, being shuttled around the country; in fact, he spent most of his childhood like that. At age 10, for instance, he spent eight months in the Philippines, because his dad was shooting *Apocalypse Now* there, and got to hang out with Marlon Brando and Dennis Hopper. "Picture being that age, and all the shit I witnessed. And the violence and the carnage. It was explained to me, but, still, it impacted me on my deepest cellular level." Not to mention, Martin suffered a heart attack during production and Charlie took it upon himself to bring his dad back to health, by wheeling him out into the sunlight every day and making him throw a baseball, until he was well enough to stand on his own.

in the middle of my rage, I said to her that she was lucky I hadn't killed her yet." The school took this as a death threat and expelled Charlie. This was three weeks before graduation. He never did get a diploma. In other words, how Charlie is today is how he always was.

Actually, that's not totally true. Martin remembers taking four-year-old Charlie and the rest of the family to Mexico when he made *Catch-22* and how distraught his son was the entire time. "We rented a duplex near a slaughterhouse," he says. "And every morning for months, Charlie would come upstairs screaming, 'Where are we? What day is it? When are we going home?'"

Then, at the age of seven, Charlie developed a stutter around the same time he had a run-in with a couple of schoolyard bullies. "I was in second or third grade and Emilio was in sixth grade and we were waiting to be picked up," says Charlie. "And these two kids were just awful, awful kids, so mean and violent. They didn't do anything to us. But the stuff they described they were going to do was even worse. 'We're going to toss you over the fence and watch your brains splatter. We're going to poke your eyes out.' Just horrible shit to say

at one point or another, he's tried to fill himself with it. As a teenager, he earned the nickname Machine, as in Ma-Sheen. "It was about being the last guy alive. Everybody else has crawled to cover, and I'm sitting there saying, 'Come on, the party's not over!'"

But one day the party will be over and what will become of him then?

"Charlie's as great a mystery to me as I am to myself, with no explanation possible," Martin says. "It'll take a miracle, but his time has yet to come. When he gets a grasp on how much he is loved and begins to love himself, everything is going to change." The words of a father, full of hope, full of doubt and full of fear for his boy.

**C**HARLIE IS AT HOME, nowhere else. It's a Tuesday, it's around 5 p.m., the beginning of the day for him, and here he comes, the lord of the manor, looking showered, shaved and well-rested, wearing a pressed white shirt, not screaming, appearing at peace in the world. Drifting along behind him is a soothingly svelte little blond number wear-

ing a filmy, shimmery, dreamy blouse. Her name is Rachel, and she hasn't been feeling well. Rachel says she's been upstairs, "puking." The reasons go unstated, but you can just imagine.

"Are you all right?" Charlie asks her.

"Yeah, I'm all right." She smiles wanly, and takes a seat at a table, while Charlie goes to make coffee.

So, what've you been up to today, Rachel?

"Oh, hangin' out," she says. "It's my birthday, actually. I'm 22 now."

Has it been everything you'd hoped it would be?

"More! I mean, yeah, last night, definitely. Last night, this morning, yeah, a pretty badass time."

What happened?

"We had Sexual Stephanie over" – who Sexual Stephanie is, she doesn't say, but you can just imagine that, too – "and she was hot. Sexy, you know?"

Charlie returns with his coffee, wants to know what Rachel has said, and Rachel giggles – and Charlie just smiles.

Ah, women. The one drug Charlie's never been able to give up. "People think I'm a bit of a rogue, of a cad, a lothario, a guy who's in a lot of shit that would lead to a constellation of kink and oddities, and I'm not," he says later on. "I just love women. I love them."

He lost his virginity at the age of 15 to a Vegas prostitute named Candy, a gorgeous redhead, with his dad sleeping in the hotel room next door. He lifted his dad's credit card to pay for the experience, paying for his cousin Joey, also 15. "I told Joey, 'Look, this is my dad's credit card, you're going second.' He was thrilled. He didn't give a shit. I remember having the greatest night of my life. Then two weeks later, my father wanted to know about this Friendly Introductions LLC, Las Vegas, bill on his statement. I explained it. His whole concern was that I didn't mistake that for love." Pause. "I'm still trying to process that one."

And so through the years it's gone, working girls, porn babes and the occasional sweet thing he wants to marry, and so he does, and maybe even has some kids with her, before realizing, once again, he needs to do some more processing, that he truly is a polyamorous kind of guy. "See, there's different gals for different feelings," he says. "Some gals you like to smoke pot with, some to drink with, some to watch a movie with, some you know they're going

to bring a girlfriend, some, like the porn girls, are just a little crazier and more dangerous. I don't know why I like that. I guess it makes things feel more epic. But my point is, it's possible to have feelings for different women at the same time."

Unfortunately, sometimes those feelings have turned violent, with Charlie going off the deep end in the ugliest of ways, reportedly once telling Denise Richards, "I hope you fucking die, bitch"; allegedly pulling a knife on Brooke Mueller and in 2010 allegedly trying to choke his porn-star date

cute. I don't know her, but I'm a fan. I like women's feet, too. I've not dated girls because of their feet, just the length of certain toes and the shape of where things should be and they're not. Hammertoes are bad. And the second toe being too long? That's bad, too."

Again, more of the Charlie Sheen nobody knows.

And there's more, lots more, more than anyone might suspect, given the single-track skew of his public persona. For instance, he once dreamed up a new way to dispense ChapStick and owns U.S. Patent No. 6,283,658

on the idea: "The housing is asymmetrical and may have an asymmetrical series of tactile protrusions to help determine the disposition of the ChapStick-dispensing apparatus, even though manual dexterity is limited as by gloves or mittens."

He takes care of his friends, has helped get two of his closest – Bob Maron, a high-end watch dealer, and Todd Zeile, a former pro baseball player – hooked up with *Anger Management* as co-executive producers, so they're around him, making him happy, all the time. While at *Men*, he looked after his longtime stunt double, Eddie Braun, by insisting that all Charlie Harper stunts, no matter how toe-stubbing small, be done by Braun, thus ensuring his buddy some quite-nice extra-large paydays.

He can be a ruthless negotiator. In 2010, with his *Men* contract up, Charlie wanted \$100 million for the next two years. Warner Bros. countered with \$48 million, Charlie said nothing doing. "Eventually, they went to \$95 million and still Charlie passed," says his manager, Mark Burg. "Then they went to 97, then to 99, and Charlie says to me, 'Did you not hear me? I said 100!' Was he happy he got it? I don't even know."

Among other things, he's a fan of the phrase "true story," as in, "I've had ear infections since I was a kid, and when I'm sleeping, I'm scratching, making it worse, so I gotta sleep with gloves sometimes. True story"; or, getting out of a car, leaving you something to think about, "I've got three nipples. Yeah. True story."

And then, suddenly, he'll lean your way and say something like, "I am Jaws, by the



**THE EX-WIVES CLUB**  
Above: With Richards at their 2002 wedding. Right: With "goddesses" Natalie Kenly and Olson, and ex-wife Mueller, from left, in 2011.

during that infamous breakout at New York's Plaza Hotel. And yet Charlie's appeal is such that none of these incidents do him damage for long. The public still loves him and girls still love him, as they always have. "When he was a client," says Heidi Fleiss, "every girl I sent him fell in love with him. All anyone ever said was good stuff, from being charming and generous, to being well-endowed, to being a great lover. Everything about him was great."

"It's funny, though," Charlie says. "A gal has to have a great face, but I'm more about cute than beautiful. Natalie Portman, beautiful. Mila Kunis, cute. Tons of

way. I don't know Jaws. I am Jaws. I am the alter ego of the shark in the movie. Oh, for Christ's sake, I'm Brody! I'm Brody!"

And then he'll reel out one of the many inspirational sayings that he keeps handy: "Can't is the cancer of happen" or "I don't hope. Hope is for suckers. I have faith."

And then he'll talk about some of his more out-there beliefs. He takes a conspiracist's view of the JFK assassination. He's a 9/11 Truther. He says he's been psychic his entire life: "Like, I know who's calling when the phone rings, most of the time, and that's weird." He says he believes in UFOs, sort of: "I mean, take the Phoenix lights of '97 - 10,000 eyewitnesses to a craft the size of 10 aircraft carriers for four hours." He pauses, looks amused. "Well, actually, you know what I believe? I believe it's more fun just to believe, man."

And then you'll try to have a meaningful discussion with him about his inner life and find it nearly impossible.

So, what's that empty spot inside that you're trying to fill, Charlie?

"Not sure. I don't know what that is. And, um."

Have you ever really looked into it?

"Nah. I just fuckin'...just appetites. Ap-

pills and acting in a "very volatile" way, according to Richards, who also said that Charlie once spray-painted their wedding photo with the words "the dumbest day of my life." Until about a year ago, they still couldn't stand each other. But then, for the sake of their kids, they patched things up and now hang out and go on vacations together, with Richards recently filming a guest spot on *Anger Management*. At night, she never turns her cellphone off, lest Charlie get in trouble and need her help. "He's another of my children," she likes to say, affectionately.

Inside Richards' superluxe, highly Italianate pad, Charlie shares a few quiet words with Sam and Lola, who are exceedingly cute and shy, and then Richards sweeps in, wearing a long summery dress, smelling like the ocean. They kiss hello, exchange a few pleasantries, sit down to dinner (chicken nuggets, the girls' favorite, prepared by Richards' dad, Irv, who lost his wife three years ago and now lives with his daughter), say grace (Charlie starts: "Bless us, O Lord, uhhh..." and Richards has to finish), then Richards takes the kids upstairs to get ready for bed, while Charlie goes out back, to the patio, to smoke and enjoy the

whole thing to explain. Not that we can't lock the door, but you know how it is. It's just not like that in so many ways. Do I want to? Yeah! Does she? Don't know."

It's kind of an intemperate thing to say, but Charlie, as usual, can't help himself. The way his mind wanders is the way his thoughts become words.

Richards returns with the bottle, offers Charlie a refill, which he declines. He's pretty much stone-cold sober. They start talking about the Great Meltdown and the longer they talk about it, the further Charlie slouches down in his seat and the more cigarettes he smokes.

"I know this sounds terrible," Richards starts off, "but I was actually hoping he was on drugs, because at least there'd be an explanation. I thought he lost his marbles. I thought he went to a point of no return. It was sad. It just broke my heart."

"A lot of laughs, though," Charlie says, quietly. "And it wasn't sad. A lot of it was draped in victory."

Richards looks at him. "I would have handled it a little differently, Chuckles. You need to take the high road. Because on the one hand, you—"

"Make perfect sense—"

## "The porn girls are just a little crazier and more dangerous," Charlie says. "I don't know why I like that. I guess it makes things feel more epic."

petites. It feels filled at times, right? But they have all these rules, and I don't get that shit, you know? Can't you fill it with things that aren't, like, all about confessionalists and pilgrimages and veganisms?"

Fun stuff?

"Yeah, man!"

Do you ever feel like you're searching for something?

"Yeah, sure, yeah, sure," he says a little too breezily. "Don't know for what though. But I do feel like I'm going to meet some wizard guide someday who will sort of lay it out for me."

If his father were here, of course, he'd be saying to his son, "Well, Charlie, you have to be your own wizard guide, don't you know that?" But Charlie is by himself now and hears no voices but his own.

**O**NE EVENING, HE GOES out to see ex-wife Denise Richards, who lives about 20 minutes northwest of him, and their two girls, Sam, eight, and Lola, seven. They got married in 2002 and split three years later, after Charlie started gambling big-time, hanging out on porn sites, abusing

cool night air. "Oh, God, ah, this is nice," he says. "Serene, man. Geez."

Richards comes out and says, "He and I are like best friends now. Confidants. He tells me everything. We take those trips together, and the girls adore him."

Charlie leans forward, exhaling, in his raspy voice, saying, "And we sleep in separate rooms. Everybody's going to want to know that, too."

Richards' face falls a little, making her look no less pretty but a good bit more stressed. "He has no filter on what he says. He wasn't like that when we got married."

"Bo-ring," Charlie intones.

"He wasn't boring. He had been sober for three years and was very humbled and charming and honest and a great man."

"And boring. Boring!"

Richards has about had it with this. She gives her ex a stern look, then excuses herself to get some more wine.

Charlie watches her leave. "She's great, isn't she? She's fucking great, man. She still looks fucking great, right?" He kind of laughs. "It bums me out," he goes on. "I mean, you know where the mind goes, right? It's tough being on trips with her sometimes. I don't want the kids to walk in on us, you know? And then there's the

"No!" Richards says, sharply. "See? You're not regretting your behavior. You think you were right in how you handled things! You're not looking back and going, I can't believe I behaved that way!"

Charlie sits up, leans in toward Richards. "Who beat who like a drum, though? Did I beat Warner Bros. like a drum or did they beat me like a drum? All the money they owed me! That they weren't going to pay me after they fired me! All my money! I mean, Who beat who? Who beat who?"

"But what did you gain from it?"

"My money!"

She sighs, deeply frustrated, and says, "You would have won the lawsuit anyway."

Charlie tilts his head at her. You can see him struggling to understand what Richards is saying. You can see him trying to comprehend, trying to figure out how to walk a little straighter of a line, but for the moment, it's all just a bit beyond him, if only because he's behaved the same way for so long, with regards to money, drinking, drugs, girls, the gold tooth that should be painted but isn't and the screaming that has not ceased yet. But at least he's trying, and if trying counts for anything, then somewhere a wizard guide must be smiling a little smile tonight.

# John Mayer's Regrets

**His big mouth nearly ruined his career. Now, in his first major interview in two years, he swears he's a changed man. By Josh Eells**

**I**F YOU'RE A SLIGHTLY DAMAGED ROCK STAR LOOKING to show the world you've made a fresh start, you could do a lot worse than Paradise Valley. An absurdly picturesque corner of Montana not far from Yellowstone National Park, it's where stars like Peter Fonda and Jeff Bridges come to decompress in Big Sky splendor. As of recently, it's also the second home of John Mayer, who traded paparazzi and bottle service for a big stone-and-wood cabin on a 15-acre spread on the banks of the Yellowstone River, with a Land Rover in the driveway and a recording studio at the top of the hill.

On a recent Saturday, Mayer stands in his new kitchen making a peanut-butter sandwich, in a blue flannel shirt, artfully weathered jeans and Japanese-designer moccasin boots. He bought this house from a local wildlife painter in January, and he's still in the

process of moving in. In the master bedroom, clothes spill from a suitcase that's still half-unpacked. In the living room, framed photos of Neil Young and Joni Mitchell lean against the fireplace, waiting to be hung. Mayer, meanwhile, is casual and unshaven, with a haircut that suggests he hasn't been around a woman in a while.

Today is Mayer's first interview since early 2010, when *ROLLING STONE* and *Playboy* each published disastrous interviews with him. In the latter, the singer compared his ex-girlfriend Jessica Simpson to "sexual napalm," joked about having a "white-supremacist dick," and tried to dissect the concept of a "hood pass" by using the word "nigger." The fallout was swift: He was branded a misogynist, a racist, a narcissist and, not for the first time, a douchebag. At a concert on the evening that the *Playboy* interview appeared, he gave a tearful, nearly five-minute, onstage

PHOTOGRAPH BY SAM JONES



UNDER THE  
BIG SKY  
Mayer at his  
new Montana  
property in May

apology. "I quit the media game," he said. "I'm done."

He approaches our interview almost like a therapy session – at one point reclining with his head on a pillow, literally on the couch – and pauses frequently to analyze how his answers will sound to the public, at the same time intensely self-aware and not at all. Sometimes, as when the topic of his 2010 interviews comes up, he turns away entirely, staring at the cows at the dairy across the river, or at the river itself as it rushes past. "It's changing," he says, "all the time."

### *First of all, how did you find this place?*

I took a road trip with friends, and we stopped here to do some fly-fishing. I loved it, so I called a real estate agent from the back of a magazine and gave her a bunch of keywords – "Seventies, Neil Young, old guitar, groovy, getaway." She showed me this place, and I was like, "Done."

*And you're out here full-time now?*

I still have my apartment in New York, but I'm here for the rest of the year. I drove out at the end of March – the "Shadow Days" video was my trip out. My stuff was in the back of that truck. That truck and another truck.

### *What do you like about it here?*

It's just a matter of not being in that world. Not being in L.A., not being in New York. You can have what I call a natural mind. I have a few windows that are shut here, so to speak. Like, I have a no-TMZ rule. When I get to the house, I want to just exist.

*It's been a while since we heard from you. This is your first interview in more than two years.*

I was just done. I was shut down. To be honest, I still want to be shut down. But at a certain point, you're just feeling sorry for yourself and running.

*Speaking of running – let's go back to the winter of 2009-2010. Describe your head space.*

I think what it comes down to is that I'd stopped appreciating the rarefied air that I take up as an artist who means a lot to people. I just turned into a punk. The world of being a celebrity is emotionally very compelling and difficult to say no to, and I just took on more and more of it. It's always the moment before somebody breaks when they act the toughest. Your adrenaline goes nuts and you go, "Bring it on," and that's when you're 30 seconds away from devolving into a ball of tears.

*And that's where you were?*

Contributing editor JOSH EELLS wrote "The Secret Life of Tom Gabel" in RS 1157.

I was holding up the walls for a while, but it was just a matter of time. There were people in my life who said, "I love that guy, but I don't want to be anywhere near him when that goes off."

### *What was happening, exactly?*

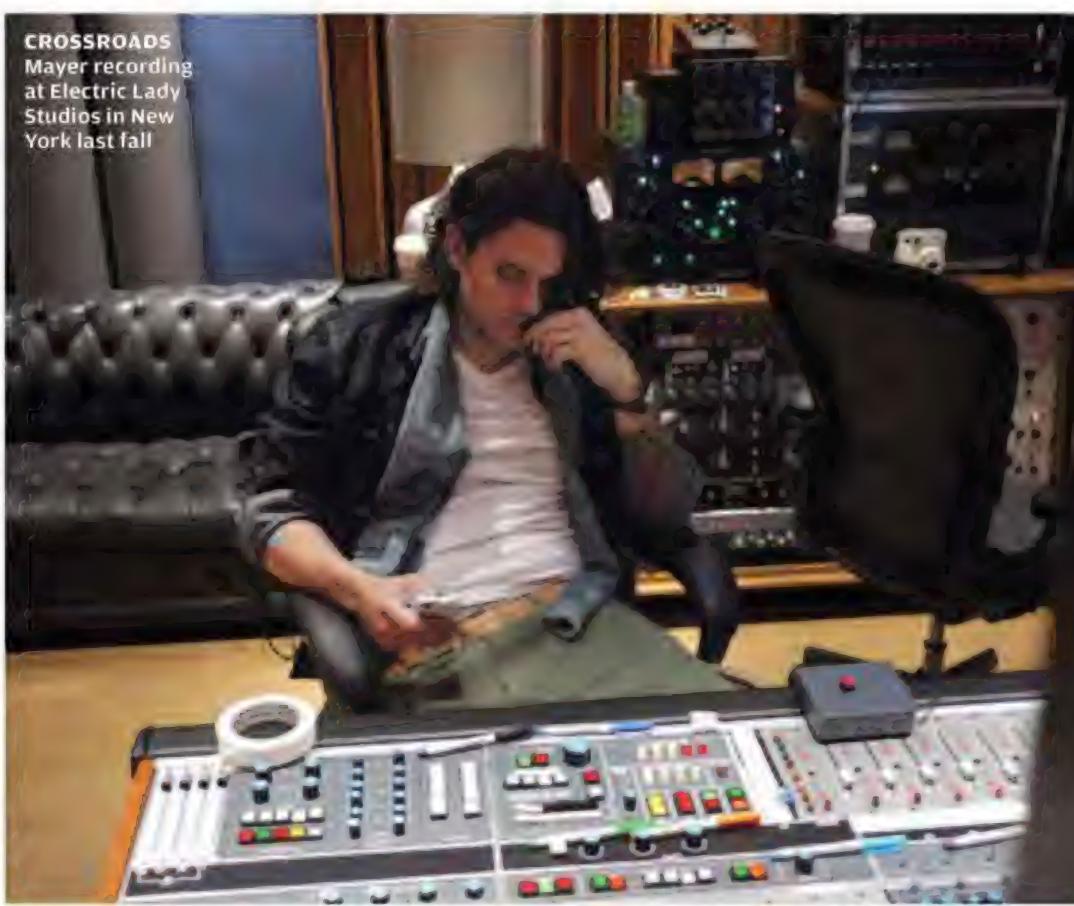
I had a gambling addiction with people's opinions of me. When someone says, "I don't like that guy," I like to sit down and talk to him, and make sure he's not misunderstanding me, and sometimes you can save it. So it only makes sense that I would scale that up to a million. And as soon as I'd get it back to even, I started making big bets again. What I didn't realize was that one of the best things you can do is walk away. I've arrived at something that I wish

apart in the tabloids; I've got people hiding in my bushes; and I don't know what's up or down," that would have been more compelling than any bravura comedy act. Or trying to be Tracy Morgan, giving you rocking quotes about sex. It's like any bad comic: You get nervous, and you bomb.

### *But you're not a comic.*

Yeah. I guess maybe I was arrogant. But at that point I was running with a lot of comics, and I just started thinking like one. I would hear someone do a stand-up act, and then I'd go, "I'm gonna say the f-word a lot. I'm gonna do bits." I don't know if that's intelligent or just the stupidest thing I've ever heard of. Not everything is a riff.

**CROSSROADS**  
Mayer recording  
at Electric Lady  
Studios in New  
York last fall



I'd known a long time ago, which is that I have to let people not respect me.

*Do you remember what was going through your head while you were doing those interviews?*

I was just performing for myself. If there was an elephant in the room, I wanted to ride it. But all people said was, "Look at that idiot on the elephant." I remember during that ROLLING STONE interview being really paranoid, thinking, "I know what you're trying to do to me, and I won't let you do it – I'm going to do it to me." That's a guy who needs to take a break.

*You mean talking about masturbation and looking for "the Joshua Tree of vaginas"?*

Anything like that. If I'd said, "My parents just got divorced; I'm getting ripped

*Tell me about the day the "Playboy" interview came out.*

It was a Wednesday in February. I was in my hotel room in Nashville. There was a Chinese restaurant outside the window, and the call came in, and I remember staring at the restaurant sign while someone said, "This is a really big deal." It's like in a movie when the explosion goes off but you don't hear it – it just goes black. It's the complete inverse of "You're nominated for five Grammys."

*At that point did you still think, "Oh, you're overreacting, it's not so bad"?*

Yeah. You're just trying to stop yourself from imploding. You're hoping you can charm your way out of the situation. Charm your way out of people being – I don't know about offended, but...

*Oh, I think people were definitely offended.*

I don't want to tell people what they should have felt. But for about five minutes there, I thought that I could disarm the situation.

*By apologizing?*

By not backing down. Just barreling through. I don't know. It was crazy. I'm never going to be able to give you a one-to-one ratio of thought to action.

*So those interviews came out. And then what happened?*

I got the shit kicked out of me. I got sort of disowned. But the subsequent crash – which sometimes I call “the market correction” – kind of ripped me out of a culture that I didn't have the strength to exit myself. It's almost like Stockholm syndrome. And I never would have known it if it hadn't sent me spiraling.

*What was going on in your head around that time?*

I remember just feeling like everyone was mad at me. Like if I was at a party, no one would come up and shake my hand.

*Was there a time when you thought it was all over?*

– when you screw up, and you feel that wave of energy of a million people saying, “Shame on you” – 20 minutes on that grill is enough to change your life. The body is not equipped to handle negative energy from so many people. What's the Kanye West line? “There's a thousand yous, there's only one of me?” I think about that a lot.

*I'm not sure that's what Kanye meant by that lyric.*

It's not. But that's the great thing about lyrics: You can take them how you want.

*Yeah, but that one is Kanye saying to a girl, “How can you refuse to sleep with me, there's a thousand girls like you but only one Kanye West?”*

Well, now he has me to thank. Because I just made it deeper.

*It's interesting to hear you bring up Kanye, though. You guys had sort of a similar situation.*

I think about Kanye a lot. He cried, I cried. We don't keep up much, but I feel a kinship with anybody who came up in the early 2000s. Like, maybe Norah is Bonnie Raitt, and I'm Neil Young... But I'll say this about Kanye. I think we were

*Eric Clapton also said something about you that kind of predicted all this. He said, “I think he becomes too caught up in being clever... He's a prime saboteur, and he will do himself in, if everyone lets him.”*

The truth hurts. But it's also a very loving statement, in a way.

*Like, “Hey, kid. Get it together”?*

I really want to share this. Early on in the crisis, I had to get on a bus after a show. The TV was on – it must've been PBS – and it was Ornette Coleman or Eric Dolphy or somebody playing. And I just thought to myself, “What would my heroes think?” Growing up, those guys kept me company. I must have fallen asleep listening to Charlie Parker's “Now's the Time” a thousand times. And then it's Black History Month, and you get on a bus and see John Coltrane with his eyes closed, playing “Impressions,” and you go, “What did I do to these guys? What did I do to what these guys mean to me?”

*Well, what about the African-American people you actually know, like your friend Buddy Guy, or your drummer Steve Jordan?*

Um... I don't want to go into that. I'll live with that for the rest of my life. But, yeah, I hurt people. I remember meeting this beautiful black girl who loves my music and who wants me to apologize so she can continue to love what I do. That's not lost on me. I fully took the lessons.

*Did you make any personal apologies?*

Yeah. I don't want to get into that either, but I did. And I kind of want to leave this part of the conversation, if I can.

**A**T THIS POINT, MAYER excuses himself to go to the bathroom. When he returns, he says he's ill – dredging up these memories has made him feel like he's going to throw up. We agree to meet the next day.

The next afternoon, he picks me up at my hotel and we drive to a cafe. There are looks of vague recognition when he walks in, but otherwise, no one pays much attention.

“I really want to become a part of this town,” Mayer says. “But you've got to assimilate yourself slowly. So right now, if somebody wants a picture, you can absolutely have a picture. I say yes most of the time, because I have a greater appreciation for people.”

Mayer orders a BLT and a cup of black coffee, which the three teenage waitresses take turns making sure is never empty.

Mayer says he spent the rest of last night feeling pretty bad. “I'd never told that story to anyone who wasn't there. And then I thought, you know, ‘It might be uncomfortable, but I can't worry about the reception.’ I moved to Montana, did an interview, and wanted to move even farther away. That means there's something I need to turn around and face.”

## “All of a sudden you have all these people calling you a douchebag, and you realize you don't have plans to deal with that – to make people stop hating you.”

Yeah. I was becoming irrelevant – and I needed to become irrelevant. I told myself, “Whatever you're left with, you're not going to complain about it. Your life will go on – but the party's over.”

*Did you see a therapist?*

I had one already. Obviously his role became more integral. He's in L.A., so a lot of it's by phone. But it's nice to have somebody just to be a witness.

*Who else did you talk to?*

Very few people. As much as it hurt – and it hurt a lot – I don't think anybody wanted to take me off the grill. But ultimately it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. You come to the end of your twenties and start becoming an adult, and you need to shut off the computer to install the new software. I wasn't going to fix the sail on the boat at sea during that storm, you know what I mean?

*I think so. But you were 32 at the time. Shouldn't you be an adult by then?*

I think that for me, age 32 was 28 with four years of “I'll get to it in a minute.”

*And this was what it took to make you an adult.*

I could have converted with about half of that [laughs]. People don't understand

both masterminds with a vision, and we ran out of runway.

*Masterminds?*

Kanye started out masterminding everything. Design, art – he was a one-man show. And then all of a sudden you have all these people calling you a douchebag, and you realize you don't have a plan for that. You don't have a plan to make people stop hating you. So you disappear for a while, reassess everything.

*You also shut down your Twitter account.*

I realized that the overall feeling of my days was starting to drift. I was day-trading – it was like opening an E\*Trade account where you're constantly keeping track of how you're doing. I wasted a lot of time on Twitter.

*I've often wondered if Twitter rewires your brain.*

It does rewire your brain. When I got off, I remember really quickly getting my RAM cache back, having deeper thoughts again. Being able to write verses – before, I was just writing lines. I made the record I made because I didn't have any leaks in the pipe. I kept all the creative water pressure moving toward the record.

I ask if he thinks he's done his penance. "I don't know," he says. "I go from being overly contrite to overly flip, and I don't want to be either. Some things in life are just a knot you're never going to get out." Today, he says, he'd rather talk about the future.

#### *So tell me about the new record.*

I'd been waiting since the beginning of 2010 to reboot everything. Somewhere in the middle of the last record cycle, I knew I had not made an enduring record.

#### *What wasn't enduring about it?*

I just don't think it was done. And I think I do great work when I'm fueled by a certain innocence, and that was gone.

#### *Musically, or because of your celebrity?*

I think they're linked. I'd stopped changing amp tubes. I'd stopped A/B-ing guitar cables. I stopped getting my hands under the hood. By the time I got into the studio [in New York] in October, I said, "I'm gonna write some bad songs. I'm not gonna edit myself." Some of them were bad – but I started getting that muscle back.

#### *How were you writing?*

I wrote on my typewriter. I would go home and write at least three pages of lyrics. You can't see what you're typing, so it's this feeling of anonymity with your ideas.

*I heard this was a pretty heavy time for you; partying a lot, writing hungover...*

I wasn't partying. But I was drinking. There was something therapeutic about waking up with a part of my head that wasn't criticizing me.

#### *Were you going out? Drinking alone?*

I'd go to bars with friends, or drink in the studio. And then I'd wake up and take out my guitar and lay on the couch and write. I don't remember being depressed. It was about being able to write without criticizing myself. I was in that strange, beautiful place where the chemistry in your brain is, like – your enemy isn't home.

I wouldn't do it again, because my body can't take it. I used to be fine by 1 p.m.; now it's two days. But I feel like I lived this really authentic New York musical vibe. I'd go to the bar, have a beer and a shot of Jameson, and walk down MacDougal Street in the Village, just waving to NYU kids.

#### *The FreeWheelin' John Mayer.*

Absolutely. I have no problem saying that. I wanted to touch a little of that. I wanted to rub the belly of it, and I did.

We started recording in May. And it was a great run. I would come home and feel really lonely, because something beautiful just took place but there was nobody around to say, "Wow." I started thinking that I wasn't all bad.

*One thing I want to ask you about is the disconnect between "public you" and "record you." In conversation, you're smart and funny and complicated. But on your records, everything is very straightforward and earnest.*

Well, I'm a lot less funny now. So maybe everything is back to normal. But I think

I've earned the right to write a really dumb lyric if I want to. I've established a base line – if I wanted to use a better rhyme, I would have. I don't have to prove to people that I can turn a phrase.

*I'm thinking about songs like the new one, "Shadow Days," with a line that goes, "I'm a good man, with a good heart..."*

It felt wrong to say "I'm a good man" after what happened. But that's what makes it kind of beautiful, too – saying it and meaning it. I know I'm a good person. If I'd put that out in May of '10, it would have been reviled. But two years is enough time to believe in molecular change.

*What about that line in "Speak for Me," where you say, "Now the cover of a 'Rolling Stone' ain't the cover of a 'Rolling Stone'?"*

I was in the studio, reading that issue of ROLLING STONE with Snooki on the cover – the one where she was riding a rocket. To be honest, it wasn't even about her, because you could look at ROLLING STONE covers since the beginning and there was always the equivalent of Snooki on a rocket. But I flipped through it and I felt a little lost – like, "Who my age can I model myself after?"

No. And that's really hard for me to say. I'll probably never be in the Top 10 again. Letting go of hits is really, really hard. But I want to age gracefully musically. I look at my catalog almost like the development of a human being – it was a cute little kid, and then it had pimples for a while, and then it became a cool adult.

This was a big moment for me: I was sitting at a restaurant, and they were playing either John Mayer Pandora or Coldplay Pandora. And my song would come on, and I'd go, "That's a really beautiful song." And then Jason Mraz would come on, and Jack Johnson, and Coldplay. And I said to myself, "You know, this is not bad company."

*You used to say that you were afraid you'd meet your soulmate and she wouldn't want anything to do with you.*

I disagree with that now. My behavior is no longer a liability. And there are plenty of exceptional women. I remember talking to this girl at a restaurant, and she was really rough on me. She walked out. And then she walked back in and said, "I'm sorry. Let's start that again." And I had so much respect for that, you know? I can't

## "In my twenties, I had weapons-grade charm. Now I'm extremely sensitive. How can you be a womanizer when you haven't been with someone since 2009?"

self after? Who's around that I can say, "I'd like to be more like that guy?" I meant it more as a fan than as a guy who's actually been on the cover of ROLLING STONE.

*There's another song called "The Age of Worry," where you sing, "Build your heart an army/To defend your innocence/While you do everything wrong."*

That song was like a letter to myself. It's me using the role of songwriter as soother, actually caring about the culture of unhappiness and cynicism. Of people not enjoying their twenties. I had my twenties.

*I'd say you had the shit out of your twenties.*

Elton John and I were in the same studio for a minute, and he had this line – he said, "You did your bit." I did my bit.

*How do you think you're different now as an artist?*

I think all the words I wanted to shy away from at the beginning of my career, I now want to be. Earnest. Sensitive. Singer-songwriter. I would love to be Jack White – or maybe I want the people who like Jack White to also like me. But I'm the guy who writes beautiful music at 85 beats per minute.

*Do you think there's still a place on pop radio for that?*

calculate how much I bother someone. But I'll find somebody who will understand.

*Do you think you could find her in Montana?*

Maybe. But I haven't had a girlfriend in a long time, and I'm OK with that. I am fully hurtable right now. I'm not a weaponized version of a man. In my twenties, I had weapons-grade charm. Now I feel like I'm extremely sensitive and open to love. I can't help it if the womanizer thing still floats around. I mean, how can you be called a womanizer if the last time you were actually with somebody was 2009? I don't think a womanizer is someone who hasn't dated a woman in three years.

*When was the last time you went on a date?*

2009? I don't know.

*What about Taylor Swift? In her 2010 song "Dear John," which she's implied is about you, she sings about being "played by your dark, twisted games."*

What is that in reference to? Bringing that up?

*To you being a womanizer.*

Oh. That's one thing I literally don't have an opinion about.

*Opinion, fine. But how did you feel when you heard it?*



**SWIFT EXIT**  
Mayer and Swift in 2009.  
"She humiliated me when I'd already been dressed down."

It made me feel terrible. Because I didn't deserve it. I'm pretty good at taking accountability now, and I never did anything to deserve that. It was a really lousy thing for her to do.

*You mean the sentiment or the way it was delivered?*

Both. I never got an e-mail. I never got a phone call. I was really caught off-guard, and it really humiliated me at a time when I'd already been dressed down. I mean, how would you feel if, at the lowest you've ever been, someone kicked you even lower?

*What about the things she's singing about in the song? Like how "I was too young to be messed with"?*

I don't want to go into that. But I will say as a songwriter that I think it's kind of cheap songwriting. I know she's the biggest thing in the world, and I'm not trying to sink anybody's ship. But I think it's abusing your talent to rub your hands together and go, "Wait till he gets a load of this!" That's bullshit.

**T**HE RESTAURANT MANAGER comes over to say there's a political event starting soon, for the local chapter of the Tea Party. "We should go," Mayer says, suppressing a grin.

Back at the house, we sit on the porch, and Mayer opens a couple of bottles of IPA. He's supposed to be on tour, but he had to cancel because of a throat problem. Last year, he was diagnosed with a granuloma, a blister near his vocal cords that's exacerbated by singing and talking. He had one surgery, but it didn't take. Sometime in the next few months he'll have another.

"It's disappointing not to tour," Mayer says. "The band sounded so good. We were on some Grateful Dead shit – really deep."

*So how does one get a granuloma?*

I'm not sure how I got it. But it just kept growing. I did a lot of therapy, like anti-acid-reflux, and it didn't work. Then I went on vocal rest. No alcohol. No spicy food. No talking. Most of September I wasn't talking at all. I'd have a Bluetooth keyboard, and someone would have an iPad to read what I type. I had to point to menus at restaurants. People look at me like I'm crazy.

So in October I had the surgery. Then they inject Botox into your vocal cords. I want to be careful about that, because I don't need to see on the Internet, JOHN MAYER GETS BOTOX – I had Botox on my vocal cords. But I didn't get enough, so now I've got to do the surgery again.

*Considering all that's happened, does the fact that you were literally forced to shut up strike you as kind of poetic?*

I can see how for other people it might be quaint. But I'd already figured it out, man. I'd done the homework and then some. I could have learned the same lessons with a quarter of the consequences.

*Yesterday you said half.*

I'm saying a quarter now. I'm going easier on myself.

*So what has changed in your life?*

I just don't think I'm supposed to be in people's faces all the time. I don't care what I think about *American Idol* or Auto-Tune. I don't Google news-search myself. It gives you this sense that the whole world is thinking about you, when really it's just, like, the *Hindustan Times* and a mommy blog. I've learned that people don't care. The paparazzi weren't in the bushes

because I'm "superstar singer-songwriter John Mayer." It was about the situation.

*You mean Jessica Simpson, and Jennifer Aniston... .*

Yeah. I made it about me. Suddenly they were my paparazzi. People were like, "Dude – no, I like some of your songs. But get out of the frame." People got upset I considered myself in, like, the top 10 male celebrities or something. It's like, "No, you're the guy I listen to when I make omelets."

*But that's a little disingenuous. At this point, you are a celebrity.*

Yeah. But it's not a bad thought to have. If I was somebody who didn't like me, I'd like to read me saying that nobody cared.

*Do you feel like you're 34 now?*

I really do. It's been an interesting and violent coming-of-age, but I appreciate where I am. Getting out was the hardest part – but staying out is easy. That's why I got this place. So I could live a life-size life.

*How do you plan on filling your days? Backpacking? Fly-fishing?*

Wake up in the morning. Get a cup of coffee, make breakfast. Go to the gym. Then just drive up the hill to the studio, take the car to work. Eventually I want to make records for other people here, too. Everybody wants to work with Adele, but so do I. I told her, "If you ever want to write together, I do a mean Track Six."

*And if we see you on TMZ in a month, coming out of some club...*

It's reductionist to say you're either living in Montana or living it up at a club. Yeah, maybe I'll go out a couple of nights in L.A. Run my hands across the lockers, have fun with my friends. But then I'll get on the plane and come back here. And I'll go to Albertsons and fill up my fridge, turn on the lights, sweep the floor, and I'm here.

*And you're not worried about getting sucked back into that world?*

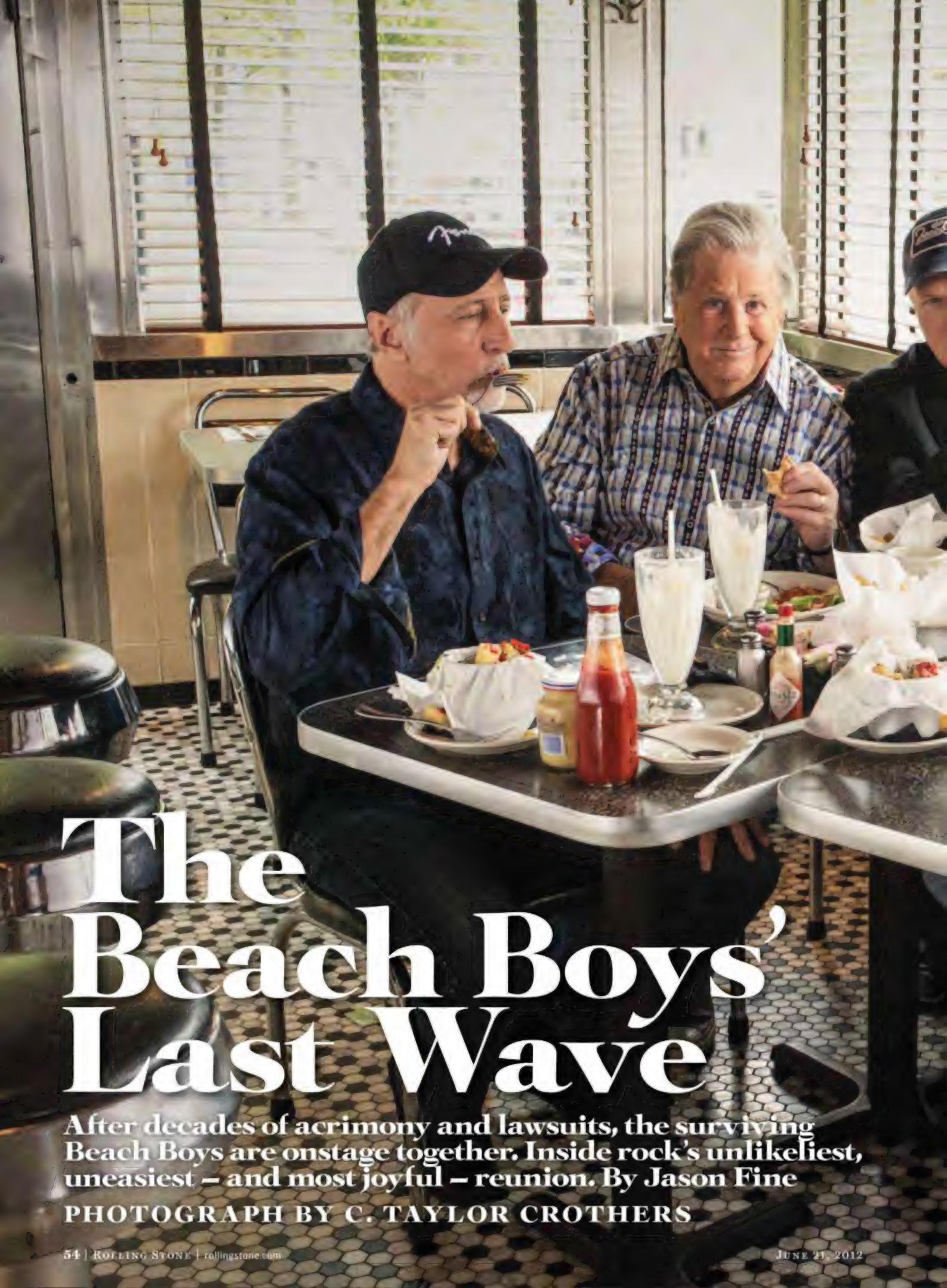
I had this same discussion with my therapist. Say I'm at the Grammys, and there's an afterparty. There's a girl giving me attention, and it's intoxicating. But there's a plane to Montana waiting on the tarmac. What do I do? What I'm learning is, I'm going to be all right either way. Because I'm a different person. Now I'm thinking about who I'm going to put in this house. I've got a room with two twin beds, and children's books between them.

*You bought children's books?*

A very resourceful interior designer bought them. I wrote this song that didn't make the record called "Sweet Unknown." There's a lyric I love: "If you want to be free, you've got to go it alone/And if you want to go home, you've got to build your own."

*You built your home.*

I'm ready, man. I spent two years not being thought about, and now I have a hard time wanting to be thought about again. I wouldn't mind being forgotten about right now. And to be honest... I think it's kind of cool. I think it's kind of cool to not be around.



# The Beach Boys' Last Wave

After decades of acrimony and lawsuits, the surviving Beach Boys are onstage together. Inside rock's unlikeliest, uneasiest — and most joyful — reunion. By Jason Fine

PHOTOGRAPH BY C. TAYLOR CROTHERS



GOOD

VIBRATIONS

David Marks, Brian Wilson, Mike Love, Bruce Johnston and Al Jardine (from left) at the Highliner in New York last month.

# H

ey, Wilson," says Mike Love, placing his hand gently on Brian Wilson's forearm.

"Hey, Love," says Wilson, brightly, as his cousin slides into the booth next to him.

"You were great last night," Love says. "Animated. Ani-fuckin'-mated."

Wilson beams. "Gracias, amigo. Our harmonies - we sound good together."

The Beach Boys' founding members, Brian Wilson, 69, and Mike Love, 71, are relaxing at a casino steakhouse in Hollywood, Florida. Dinner together is not an everyday thing for Love and Wilson. Or even an every-decade thing. The last holiday together Love remembers was Thanksgiving '99. "I invited him up," Love says. "He said, 'Yeah, Mike. Family first.'" But it's usually not like that. The Southern California cousins have been estranged for much of the Beach Boys' career, their relationship fractured by disagreements over the group's musical direction and hard-fought lawsuits, mostly instigated by Love, over issues like songwriting credits and some of the pettiest financial squabbles imaginable. "Our family's been pretty screwed up," says Wilson, who himself has battled mental illness since the Sixties. "It's sad."

Despite all that, tonight the sole surviving family members in America's greatest family band actually seem to be enjoying each other's company. "We're cousins," Love tells me. "And we love each other."

It's a rare night off on the Beach Boys' week-old 50th-anniversary tour, a 73-date, 14-country trip that's possibly the most unlikely rock reunion ever mounted. In addition to Love and Wilson, who have spent about as much time in court as onstage together during the past three decades, the show also includes original Beach Boys Al Jardine and David Marks (the guitarist who played on the group's first five albums, before he clashed with Wilson's dad and quit); Bruce Johnston, who joined in 1965 after Wilson quit touring; and Jeffrey Foskett, who has sung some of the most challenging and beautiful parts in the Beach Boys and in Brian Wilson's solo band since 1980. Two key members are missing: Wilson's brothers, Dennis, who drowned in 1983, and Carl, who died of cancer in 1998.

It's hard to imagine two more different guys than Love and Wilson: Love is a swaggering, acerbic mix of wily businessman and hippie seeker - the guy who cuts

corners on every possible tour expense, but is also a longtime vegetarian and student of Transcendental Meditation, who once hired an astrologer to choose optimal colors to wear onstage each night. (Suggested color schemes are still posted nightly in the band's dressing rooms.)

Wilson, on the other hand, is a bundle of nerves - halting, anxious, impulsive. When the waiter arrives to describe the specials, he interrupts. "You got prime rib?" he asks. "Medium-well?"

"Any way you want, sir."

"I'll have a rib-eye steak, medium rare. And Caesar salad." Then, to the rest of us: "What are you guys gonna have? You should get Caesar salad. Trust me."

"Bri," Love says after the waiter retreats, "remember when Dennis and I dropped trousers and raced across the stage and traded pants on the other side?"

"No way!" says Wilson. "That's a Mike Love kind of rock & roll thing." Then he adds, almost embarrassed, "We're not crazy. We're just a little loony. We're loony people. You should know that about us."

Later, Wilson asks, "Isn't Kokomo around here, Mike?" "Kokomo," from 1988, was the Beach Boys' last Number

"Whaaaaat?" Love yells.

Wilson, never one to embrace conflict, bravely perseveres: "Marcella's pretty cool, Mike." He sings the song's first lines, "Hey, hey, Marcella!"

Love: "What are we gonna cut?"

Wilson: "Well..."

Love: "Maybe we can alternate songs."

Wilson: "Yah, OK, all right, whatever."

Wilson lets it go, but soon he throws out another idea. "Add Some Music" is a cool, cool song. We should do that one. You and I wrote that, you know." (He's referring to "Add Some Music to Your Day," a gorgeous gospel track from 1970's *Sunflower*.) "We wrote that in my Bel-Air house. You just said it one day, 'Let's write a song called "Add Some Music to Your Day."'"

Love: "I said that?"

Wilson: "You said that."

Love: "If he says I said it, I said it."

Wilson: "We put that song together in a half-hour!"

The subject is dropped, and Wilson leans back, looking worn out by the effort to convince his cousin of the value of songs that may not be as well known as "Surfin' Safari" but that show the evolution of the Beach Boys beyond their teenage hits. This

## "Mike's an entertainer. Brian is an artist," says band member Jeff Foskett. "There's room for both, but it's hard to reconcile."

One single, and their only hit that Wilson had no involvement in. "Somewhere down around the Florida Keys, right? We should go there." He says it totally deadpan, so it's impossible to tell whether he's joking. Love chuckles and lets it go.

Wilson's steak comes; he picks it up to eat off the bone. "Sir! Sir!" he shouts. When the waiter comes, he says, "Never mind."

"What's up, Bri?" says Love.

"I was gonna get another beer, but I don't want to get drunk."

"You're not gonna get drunk, you're having a big meal," says Love. "What the fuck, it's your night off!"

Wilson is on his third Miller Lite by the time he brings up what's really on his mind: the set list for tomorrow's concert. "Oh, Michael," he says, faux-casually, shifting uncomfortably to face Love.

"Yes, sir?"

"I have feedback from my family," Wilson continues. "They want new songs."

Love grins, in a way that could be confused with a smirk. "Like what, cuz?"

"I was thinking 'Marcella,'" Wilson blurts, referring to a great but obscure 1972 track he wrote about his favorite masseuse.

argument dates back to at least 1965, when Wilson began to write personal, adventurous music for the monumental *Pet Sounds*, while Love preferred to keep cranking out two-and-a-half-minute surf hits. When Wilson set off into avant-garde terrain the following year with *Smile*, Love disliked the abstract lyrics, which he described to me as "acid alliteration." Wilson has said that Love's disdain is one reason he abandoned *Smile*, though Love denies this.

"Mike's an entertainer," says Foskett. "Brian is an artist. There's room for both, but it's a fundamental difference, and pretty hard to reconcile."

The issue of the set list has caused friction on the tour so far. Love, who licenses the Beach Boys name for 125-plus shows a year with his own band (which also features Bruce Johnston), prefers fast-paced sets packed with early-Sixties hits and covers. Wilson, for the past 14 years, has toured with a 10-piece band that delivers luxurious arrangements of Beach Boys hits and gems resurrected from deep in his catalog.

"The set list is the script of the play," says Wilson's horn player, Paul Von Mertens, the co-musical director on the Beach Boys

*Editor-at-large JASON FINE profiled Merle Haggard in RS 1088.*



tour (along with Scott Totten, from Love's band). "So the question is, what story do we want to tell?

"It could be a lot worse," he adds. "Just that we're all onstage together is a miracle. It's a tentative peace that's been worked out, and no one wants to upset the balance, or risk everything falling apart."

"It's tricky," Love tells me. "Brian's been doing his tours the way he wants to for many years. And I've been doing the same thing. I have always felt that people come to see you on the basis of what songs you're known for. I would never think of not doing our biggest hits. That would be foreign to my way of thinking."

Wilson shrugs when I ask him about his vision for the Beach Boys tour. "I'd like to scare people a little."

**L**AST MAY, THE BEACH BOYS got together at Capitol Studios to test the waters for a 50th-anniversary reunion. The objective that day was to remake "Do It Again," a 1968 single that itself was a throwback to the group's early sound. But Wilson had something else in mind, too — so he asked the Beach Boys

**THAT'S NOT ME**  
Love and Wilson in L.A. around the time of the *Smile* sessions in 1966; Love thought the lyrics were "acid alliteration."

to gather around the piano to sing some new music he'd been working on. "None of them knew what he was doing," says Joe Thomas, a longtime Wilson collaborator, who was enlisted to help bring the reunion together. But Wilson kept on — "C'mon, guys, let's go."

"When he first started playing the chord progressions," Love remembers, "I was standing there, thinking, 'Wow, that's cool, that's a certain type of Brian Wilson chord change.' I thought, 'Shit — he's got all his talents intact.'"

Then Wilson began to call out instructions for the vocals — "layering in our voices," says Jardine. "Somehow he had worked out this entire arrangement in his head. He knew each person's range, and just stacked one voice on top of the other."

An hour later, the Beach Boys had cut their first new track together since 1985, "Think About the Days," which appears as the hymnlike opening to the new album, *That's Why God Made the Radio*.

"I thought it would be cool to show we've still got something special up our sleeve," Wilson says. "And the guys came through for me."

As it turns out, while few people would have bet that a Beach Boys reunion was possible, Wilson had been thinking about it for years. Some of the songs started to take shape back in 1999, after Wilson recorded a solo album, *Imagination*, with Thomas. (Thomas co-wrote several tracks on the new album.) "He had all these great things," Thomas says. "But he didn't want to finish them. He'd say they were songs for the Beach Boys. At first, I thought that was just an excuse. But after I heard him say it about four or five tracks we'd done, I realized — he's not BS'ing anybody, he's making a Beach Boys record."

When the guys finally got together to record, another question remained: How would they fill in for Carl, whose warm tenor was the group's dominant voice in later years? What they discovered, in the early sessions at Ocean Way Studios in Hollywood, was that Wilson and Jardine, who used to sing higher than Carl, could cover his parts because their voices had gotten lower as they got older. "It's almost eerie," says Jardine, who sings one of the album's most spectacular leads on "From There to Back Again." "Brian really has that Carl punch now, and we both meet in his range — that really satisfying and mellow sound he had."

*That's Why God Made the Radio* ping-pongs between nostalgic, sun-splashed songs and the more reflective, melancholic music Wilson tends to write these days. The highlight comes at the end: a harmony-drenched 13-minute "suite" built around a twilight Pacific Coast Highway drive. Thomas says the suite's original tracks, recorded as cassette demos, sat on his shelves for years before he and Wilson started working on them again in 2008. "It sounded like a bunch of unfinished parts to me," says Thomas. "But all along, Brian had this idea about how to put them together.... It was like he wrote the songs in code."

The final segment of the suite, "Summer's Gone," started from a conversation Wilson had with his brother Carl shortly before he died. (Wilson's mother had passed away two months earlier, and Brian was dealing with the fact that he might end up the last surviving member of the Wilson family.) According to Thomas, Carl had planned to record a song for *Imagination*. But when Brian visited, Carl told him, "You know, Brian, I'm not gonna be able to make it." Brian's response was unusual. "He told me his last words to Carl were 'I think I'm gonna stay for a while,'" says Thomas. "I mean, what a weird and emotional thing to say: 'I know you've got to go, but I'm gonna stay for a while.'"

One afternoon in February, the Beach Boys crowd into the control room at Ocean

## The Beach Boys

Way to listen to the suite. John Stamos, the actor (a serious Beach Boys fan who often performs with Mike Love's band), stands in the back, twirling his sunglasses. When the music ends, the room falls silent. Finally, Stamos breaks the ice. "Magical," he says. Love, sitting next to me on a leather couch, has another reaction, which he demonstrates by putting his fingers into the shape of a gun, placing it under his chin and shooting himself in the head. "It's brilliant, beautiful, but I didn't write it, so it doesn't have that silver cloud on the cumulus nimbus," he says. "It's more cumulus than I probably would do."

Wilson may no longer have the same intense drive as he did making *Pet Sounds*, when Love dubbed him "Stalin of the studio." But he is clearly in control. Over two days at Ocean Way, it's a thrill to watch Wilson work — driving the singers through multiple takes of each line of a song, arranging harmonies and teaching them to the group on the spot. In all, 28 tracks were cut. And with only one more day of studio time booked, no one but Wilson knows which dozen will make the album. This makes some people anxious. "We're just waiting for word," says Jardine, sitting on the edge of a couch with his wife, Mary Ann, and their 10-year-old whippet, Willie.

One song Wilson seems most excited about is an R&B-style track Love wrote, "Daybreak Over the Ocean." "I love your new tune, man," he tells Love. "It kind of snuck up on me. I wasn't ready for it. Like, 'Hey! What? Where? Who?'"

Wilson does not react the same way to Jardine's song. For the second day in a row, Jardine bugs Brian to work on "Waves of Love," a lovely track that features one of Carl Wilson's last vocals.

Wilson doesn't want to hurt Jardine's feelings, so he tries to ignore him. But Jardine keeps pushing. "We don't know where this is going, Bri," Jardine persists, "but it's important to put it in the bank."

"No, can't do it today, Al," Wilson says.

"Let's do it while you're here," Jardine pleads. "We've got to deliver some stuff, to the top."

Wilson closes his eyes and folds his hands across his chest. Then, a moment later, he bounces his hulking frame out of the chair, exits the control booth and walks out the front door to his car. He does not return to the studio until the next day. "Waves of Love" is not included on the final album.

**M**IKE LOVE IS UNDER the gun. He's got to write final lyrics for "Isn't It Time" tonight and sing them tomorrow, the final day of recording. He doesn't seem anxious about the deadline, reminding Wilson how he wrote the lyrics for "California Girls" in the hallway right before he sang them. After staring at a blank legal pad for a while, Love suggests a dinner break. So we hop into his growling blue Bentley and zigzag through Hollywood to El Cholo, an old-school Mexican joint where he's eaten with his family and the Wilson clan since he was a kid.

Love is wearing a loud patterned shirt, a Caesars Palace cap and three massive jeweled gold rings on his right hand. More gold dangles inside his shirt. Over Pacificos and Sonora Style Nachos (his favorite, and vegetarian), he tells jokes, shares stories and exudes a vibe that is somehow mellow and edgy at the same time.

these years. "There's no doubt the talent's there," he says. "I wonder about his health. He's overweight and out of shape, and he doesn't seem to pay much attention.... It's tough, when you've seen the Brian Wilson you grew up with and the Brian Wilson that's going to be onstage nowadays."

Love says he'd like to help get Wilson on a diet-and-exercise regimen. "My grandmother Wilson died of diabetes-related stuff, and his father, Murry, passed away about two years after having several yards of his intestines taken out for diverticulitis. So there's a history of health issues.... As you get older you either become pro-



HERE TODAY  
Performing a 44-song set in Chicago in May

Though all the Beach Boys dabbled in TM, Love and Jardine stuck with it after they spent two weeks in 1968 studying with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India, along with the Beatles and Donovan. "It was the most fascinating experience I ever had," Love says.

"Prior to learning to meditate," he continues, "I drank a fair amount of alcohol. I'm a Pisces, a water sign, and Pisces are notorious for being drug addicts or alcoholics. Back then, I wouldn't have one drink; I'd drink half of a fifth of vodka with orange juice, smoke a fair amount of marijuana or hashish. Once I learned to meditate, I stopped all of that, because I found myself feeling energetic and good, versus feeling groggy and hungover. It was a no-brainer."

Love meditates twice daily, once in the morning and once before showtime. "If I were to not have meditated this morning, I'd be irritable right now," he says. "All my thoughts and actions would be influenced by that irritability, but if I am able to meditate very regularly, I feel great."

Love is aware of his reputation — "big, bad Mike Love," he calls himself, with a laugh. In truth, he says, "I've got different things going on — part spiritualist, part humanitarian, part brat."

I ask Love if he's nervous about being back on the road with Wilson after all

active about staying in shape and taking care of yourself or, you know, time has its effect on you."

"When we were younger," Love continues, "no one really knew what was wrong with Brian. Nobody knew about mental illness. We just had no clue about that as kids, as cousins and brothers, growing up.... I think there's probably a tad bit more compassion that goes into our being together now. And I think there's sensitivity to the fact that there's only a limited amount of time left for this cast of characters to do what they do. There's a lifespan involved here."

**T**HE BIGGEST MIRACLE OF the Beach Boys' 50th-anniversary tour might be that they make it to the stage every night. The logistics of transporting five senior-citizen rock stars, plus a 10-member band, 25 crew members, and assorted wives and families, on a tour with as many as five shows a week, is a feat in itself. (And not without casualties: The first tour manager quit for "personal reasons" after five shows.)

Complicating things further is the fact that Wilson and Love operate very differently. On his tours, Love travels lean and mean, what his bandmate Bruce Johnston calls "the Walmart frame of mind," flying

coach, renting equipment in each city, carrying only four crew members. Wilson, on the other hand, tours with state-of-the-art equipment and rides in his own deluxe tour bus. "He can hide whenever he wants," says Love.

For the Beach Boys' tour, they're essentially combining these approaches — running two tours out of one. During the Florida shows in May, Brian travels on his own bus, while everyone else piles into a rented coach — 25 people driving gig to gig. "Mike's attitude is it's, like, four hours between gigs," says tour manager Michael Swift. "If they can't sit up in a bus for four hours, let 'em take a taxi."

Another issue: iPhones. Rather than printing each day's itinerary for the band, everything on the tour is communicated via an app called Master Tour Mobile. The app is updated with itineraries, flight information and daily schedules. The only problem is, most of the guys don't really know how to use their iPhones.

"Is it iBooks? Wait, I don't have it," says Al Jardine, fumbling with his phone in line at the breakfast buffet at the Tampa Airport Marriott. "Oh, I do. Here it is here. Now what do I do with it?"

I'm sitting in the bus for a half-hour and no one came. I fell asleep. I didn't know where the hell I was. I thought, 'Where is everybody?'

Asked how his bandmates have changed, Jardine says, "Mike has taken it upon himself to carry the flag for the group. Come hell or high water, he's gonna be the last man standing. It's his purpose in life just to be there. Brian's given him this wonderful, amazing opportunity. The lead singer always has the power, in any organization. He develops this condition we call LSD — lead-singer disease." He says this with a laugh, not with resentment. "Mike never played any instruments other than the little bit on the saxophone, so out of necessity he invented himself. He created himself as the lead singer."

Jardine says his main concern is how Wilson will handle the stress of this tour. "He needs his creature comforts," he says. "He's so delicate — he's like a GPS machine or something; all the guidance features have to be calibrated perfectly. Otherwise, he can veer off somewhere. I don't want anything to happen to him. He's our leader — he's our center."

we do," he says. "It's not exactly business as usual, but it's friendship as usual. It's friendship defrosted. Seriously, everybody is/was/is friends, no matter what silly lawsuits or whatever those guys did. With these guys, it's like taking a coat out of the closet after 20 years — and it still fits! It's totally wonderful. It's like freeze-dried food."

Then, like everyone else, Johnston shares his views of Wilson. His analysis doesn't involve health concerns or a sensitive GPS system. Instead, he sees Wilson as an astronaut who may have ventured too far into space, but still checks in with those of us stuck on planet Earth.

"Did you see *2010*?" he asks, referring to the sequel to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. "Remember Dave Bowman, the astronaut? That's how I see Brian. He's way up in space, floating around. He was real successful, hitting home runs like crazy. But somewhere between *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*, it kind of sucks him in, and no one can understand quite what he was doing. Brian appears, then he disappears. In the film, Dave came back on a television screen and talked to his wife and said, 'I'm going to

## "There's a limited amount of time for this cast of characters to do what they do," says Love.

(Jardine is often a little lost. On the plane from Tampa to New York, he couldn't figure out how to flush the toilet, so he had to ask the stewardess. "Oh, that one!" he said. "I'm not very good at computers, either.")

Jardine is a warm, thoughtful guy who spends most of his time with his family on their ranch in Big Sur. His voice has remarkably maintained the same youthfulness and punch it had when he sang the lead on "Help Me Rhonda" 47 years ago — perhaps more than anyone, he makes it sound like the Beach Boys up there. Off-stage, however, Jardine is struggling to find his place. "We don't discourse," he says over breakfast with his wife, Mary Ann, and their twins, Drew and Robbie, 26. "You've got the Love band, who've been together for years and have developed a style. Brian's band has been going for a long time, too — so we've been coming from three different places. Our managers assume I know what they know. And I don't."

The other night, in Georgia, as soon as the show ended, Jardine ran offstage and onto the bus — just like the Beach Boys did in the old days. "I thought we were leaving," he says. "The old Beach Boys — prior to Love's Beach Boys, the last-millennium Beach Boys — that's the way we did it. After the show, boom — we were gone. So

**I**F JARDINE GETS LOST IN THE chaos, Bruce Johnston thrives on it. At 69, the man is a ball of energy, bouncing off the walls of the backstage area in Tampa in white shorts, a T-shirt and Stan Smiths, talking to anyone he passes in the halls. Johnston, who got his start playing with Phil Spector as a teenager, joined the Beach Boys in 1965, after Brian quit the road. He won a Grammy in 1976 for composing "I Write the Songs" (a fact he will frequently remind you of), and he also wrote some fine tunes for the Beach Boys, including "Deirdre," from *Sunflower*, and "Disney Girls," which he performs on this tour.

Johnston has a way with words — he calls the Beach Boys reunion the "When Surf Freezes Over" tour — and sometimes his lack of a filter gets him in trouble, like when a reporter taped him telling autograph seekers that Obama is a socialist and an "asshole." But he also has a lot of nice things to say, especially about Wilson. "I have the best seat in the house every night to watch my hero, Brian Wilson," he says.

An hour before showtime, Johnston is in his dressing room, ironing his jeans. "I don't put those Seventies creases in them anymore," he says.

When I ask if it feels sentimental to be onstage together, he laughs. "This is what

some incredible place," then he was gone. I see Brian that way. He's been chosen to do incredible things. We just have to wait for them.

"When I listen to Brian talk now, I kind of get it," Johnston continues. "He probably has more things going inside that head of his — whole records that he's made up there — but he's one of those guys that doesn't need to talk that much. I listen to him closely. I love having the chance to be around him. It's not going to last very long, he's not going to do 170 concerts a year, that's not what he is. I think he's come back on the screen for a little bit, before he goes back, getting ready to go to Jupiter, and start life over."

**T**HIRTY-SIX MINUTES BEFORE showtime in Tampa, Brian Wilson sits in a chair alone on the dark stage, just out of view of thousands of people filing into their seats, some wearing Hawaiian shirts, a few older women carrying pompoms. Wilson seems oblivious to the rumble of excitement on the other side of the curtain. His eyes are closed, hands resting peacefully on his knees.

"I like to meditate before we go on," he says. "It gets busy backstage, so I come out onstage, where it's quiet." Wilson says he uses the time to "pray a little."

## The Beach Boys

"I think about how I'm gonna sing, and how the boys will sound."

He'd told me this earlier, sitting in his dressing room before soundcheck. "Cool dressing room," Wilson noted, even though it was just a tiny beige cubby with one fabric chair, two plastic folding chairs, a mirror, a jar of nuts and some potato chips.

We had just arrived from Fort Lauderdale, a four-hour drive. I planned to use the time to interview Wilson about the tour. Instead, he rode up front with his driver, Glenn Jones, white Nikes perched on the dash, staring straight ahead. The only times Wilson spoke were to place a McDonald's order (vanilla shake) and to ask Jones to switch the satellite radio from "Malt Shop Oldies" to the Forties music station. When I turned on my recorder and started asking questions, Wilson cut me off after a minute and six seconds.

Now, in his dressing room, Wilson's in a more talkative mood. "We scored a concert, man!" he says. It's not clear exactly what that means, but it sounds like a good thing. "I hope it's a good one. I'm *hopin'*!"

I ask if it's getting easier each night. "It's leveling off, I guess," he says. "I'm getting used to playing piano - I didn't used to play this much."

Bad-scary. "What a Fool Believes' scared me a lot. Michael McDonald. I can't handle that."

I ask if the Beach Boys ever scare him. "Not scary, we are just so into our harmonies."

He gets quiet for a while. "I wouldn't have thought we would all be together again," he says. "I never thought it would happen. But when we sing, those feelings go away. We sound good."

**T**HOSE ARE NICE PANTS," says Brian Wilson to a woman sitting next to him on the flight from Tampa to New York. "Are they cotton or something?"

"Cotton blend, I think," the woman responds, hesitantly.

"What are you drinking?"

"Bloody Mary."

"Vodka? Is it good?"

"A little strong."

Wilson laughs, a little too loudly. "That's good," he says. "Those are really nice pants."

Then he closes his eyes and munches some nuts. After a while, he tries to pick up the conversation.

more times are we going to get to come to New York?"

There are also still questions about the set list. Since Wilson proposed adding "Marcella" and "Add Some Music to Your Day" in Fort Lauderdale, not much has happened. During soundcheck in Tampa yesterday, Wilson pushed the issue.

"'Marcella,' please," he called out to the band.

"We can't do it," responded co-musical director Scott Totten, Love's guitar player. "We don't know it yet."

"My guys know it," Wilson replied. "We can do it."

Instead, they take a stab at "Add Some Music to Your Day." But Totten cuts it off in the middle of the first take, because no one remembers the words.

So, the first night at the Beacon, no new songs are added. To make matters worse, at least to those who want the Beach Boys reunion tour to differentiate itself from Mike Love's tour using the Beach Boys name, John Stamos is in the house and jumps onstage for several songs - including one awkward moment when he pulls a petrified-looking little girl from the audience and dances with her on his shoulders. Later, several band members mull

## "I never thought we would be together again," says Wilson. "But when we sing, those feelings go away."

Wilson sits back, twists his spine, winces. He's struggling with back problems. He can't walk too far and needs help getting on and off the raised platform where plays his white piano onstage. "I can't exercise, really. So I have to sit around a lot."

Wilson is quiet for a while, then out of nowhere brings up one of his favorite *Pet Sounds* tracks. "Wouldn't It Be Nice" had that Phil Spector Wall of Sound feeling to it," he says. "We cut it at Gold Star. Spector was around when we cut it. I think he produced it indirectly. Not actually produced it, but indirectly produced it. The spirit of the Wall of Sound."

Talk turns to other old colleagues, like Three Dog Night's Danny Hutton, a friend from wilder days in the Sixties L.A. rock scene. "I haven't talked to him in a long time," Wilson says. "I wouldn't know what to say. Some of my old buddies are just gone from my life."

He tells me that he always found Hutton's singing "scary," which for Wilson can mean one of two things: good-scary, in the sense that it challenges you, like the Beatles album *Rubber Soul*, or bad-scary, in the sense that you get frightened and want to hide.

In Hutton's case, he says. "His voice is just so resonant." Good-scary. Another group he mentions is the Doobie Brothers.

"You keep stirring it!"  
"It's too strong if I don't."  
"How you feeling? A little woozy?"  
"It takes more than one. Do you drink?"  
"Not really. Do you feel relaxed?"  
"Yes. You?"  
"Very."

Then, after another long pause, Wilson says, "What day is it?"

"Sunday. [Laughs] Have you been flying a lot?"

"Yeah, we're in a band. We're called the Beach Boys."

In first class this afternoon are four of five principal Beach Boys (Love flew earlier) and "vice principal" Jeff Foskett. Flying makes Wilson anxious. "It's so cumbersome," he says. "You gotta take your shoes off, put your shoes back on, you gotta bend over." When he flies, Wilson has to be first on the plane and the first off. "That makes it easier," he says. "But still not easy."

The trip is nerve-racking for the other guys as well: There is a lot of pressure on two New York shows at the Beacon, plus an intense schedule that includes *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* and *Charlie Rose*. "I have so many memories of coming to New York," Johnston told me. "Playing our shows, getting dressed up in our suits, women everywhere, nightclubs." He pauses. "You have to wonder, how many

around glumly at the afterparty. One calls the show a "travesty." He says, "If they want theater, we can do theater. But I thought this was a rock & roll show."

The next night, the bandmates manage to get together a gorgeous version of "Add Some Music to Your Day," which they sing standing around Wilson's piano, and Wilson finally introduces a rocking version of "Marcella."

With or without those two new songs, and with or without Stamos, watching the Beach Boys perform in 2012 is a rare thrill. Each of the three shows I see is filled with fun and joy and something deeper, too. In the best moments, when the group harmonizes on "Please Let Me Wonder" and "Forever" and "I Get Around," or when Wilson sings his fragile, prescient "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times," it's impossible not to be moved by these guys who, night after night, put aside huge personal differences and ancient hurts to create music full of radiance and hope - music no one else but them can create. "We took a risk trying to pull this off," says Love, riding through New York in the back of a black SUV the day after the Beacon shows. "And I think we proved the mathematical equation: The whole really is worth more than the sum of its parts."



# Rise from the Ashes

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# THE LAST AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR

Three years ago, a 25-year-old soldier walked off his base in Afghanistan and into the hands of the Taliban. Now he's a crucial pawn in negotiations to end the war. Will the Pentagon really leave a man behind? By Michael Hastings

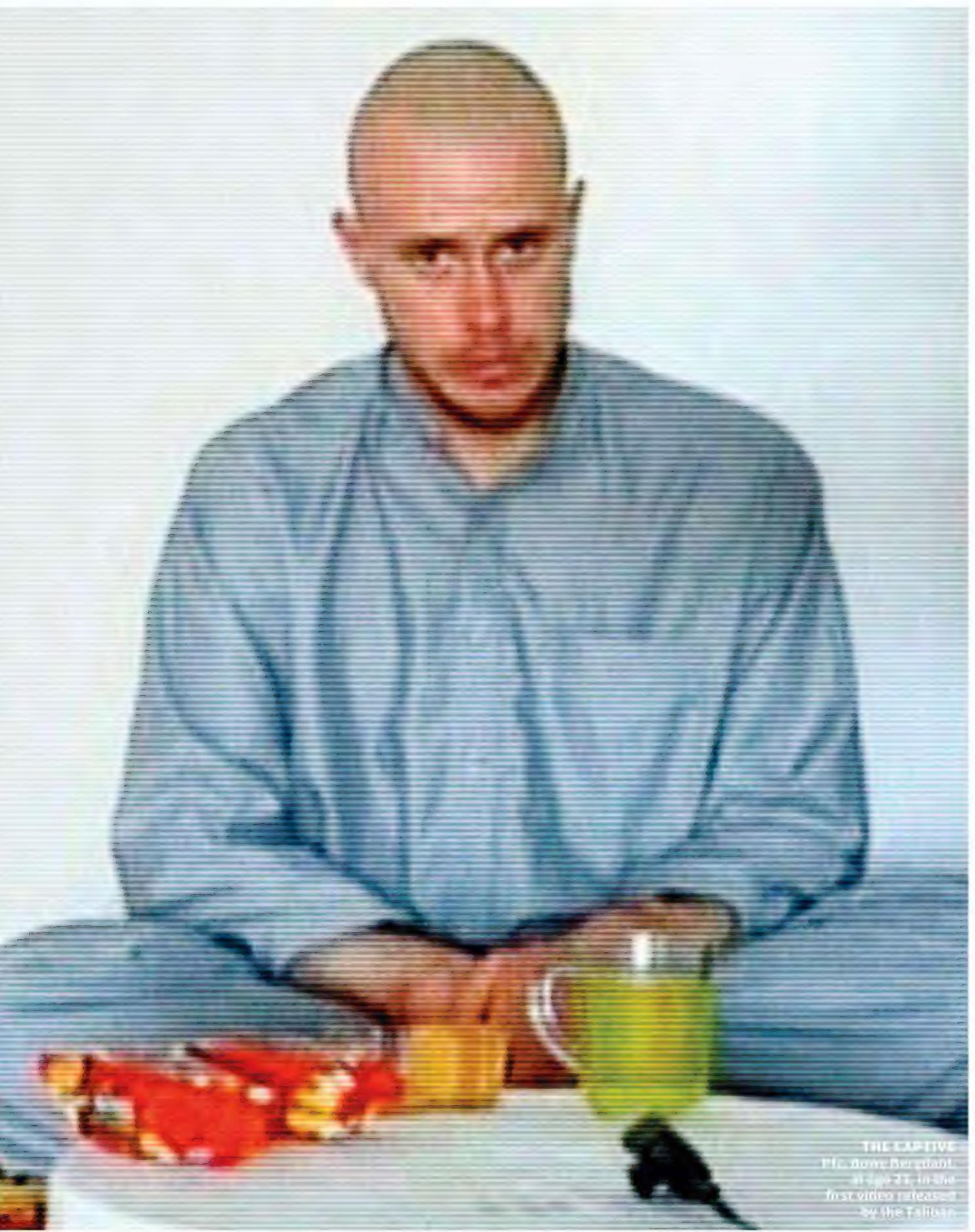
**T**HE MOTHER AND FATHER SIT at the kitchen table in their Idaho farmhouse, watching their son on YouTube plead for his life. The Taliban captured 26-year-old Bowe Bergdahl almost three years ago, on June 30th, 2009, and since that day, his parents, Jani and Bob, have had no contact with him. Like the rest of the world, their lone glimpses of Bowe – the only American prisoner of war left in either Iraq or Afghanistan – have come through a series of propaganda videos, filmed while he's been in captivity.

In the video they're watching now, Bowe doesn't look good. He's emaciated, maybe 30 pounds underweight, his face sunken, his eye sockets like caves. He's wearing a scraggly beard and he's talking funny, with some kind of foreign accent. Jani presses her left hand across her forehead, as if shielding herself from the images onscreen, her eyes filling with tears. Bob, unable to look away, hits

play on the MacBook Pro for perhaps the 30th time. Over and over again, he watches as his only son, dressed in a ragged uniform, begs for someone to rescue him.

"Release me, please!" Bowe screams at the camera. "I'm begging you – bring me home!"

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BOWE BERGDAHL ARRIVED in Afghanistan at the worst possible moment, just as President Barack Obama had ordered the first troop surge in the spring of 2009. Rather than withdraw from a disastrous and increasingly deadly war started by his predecessor, the new commander in chief had decided to escalate the conflict, tripling the number of troops to 100,000 and employing a counterinsurgency strategy that had yet to demonstrate any measurable success. To many on Obama's staff, who had been studying *Lessons in Disaster*, a book about America's failure in Vietnam, the catastrophe to come seemed almost preordained. "My God," his deputy national security adviser Tom Donilon said at the time. "What are we getting this guy



THE EXPLIVE

Eminem: Berzerk  
W/ 2Pac, in the  
first video released  
by the Taliban.

into?" Over the next three years, 13,000 Americans would be killed or wounded in Afghanistan - more than during the previous eight years of war under George W. Bush.

Bowe's own tour of duty in Afghanistan mirrored the larger American experience in the war - marked by tragedy, confusion, misplaced idealism, deluded thinking and, perhaps, a moment of insanity. And it is with Bowe that the war will likely come to an end. On May 1st, in a surprise visit to Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan, President Obama announced that the United States will now pursue "a negotiated peace" with the Taliban. That peace is likely to include a prisoner swap - or a "confidence-building measure," as U.S. officials working on the negotiations call it - that could finally end the longest war in America's history. Bowe is the one prisoner the Taliban have to trade. "It could be a huge win if Obama could bring him home," says a senior administration official familiar with the negotiations. "Especially in an election year, if it's handled properly."

Bowe Robert Bergdahl was born in Sun Valley, Idaho, on March 28th, 1986 - the same day as Lady Gaga, as his parents like to point out. Bob and Jani had moved to Idaho from California after college, building a small, two-bedroom home on 40 acres of farmland not far from the small town of Hailey, deep in the mountains of Wood River Valley. His father worked construction, his mother odd jobs, living the life of ski bums, nearly off the grid. In 1983, the year Bowe's older sister Sky was born, his parents pulled in \$7,000 and paid off the hospital bills for her birth with weekly \$20 deposits.

Rather than put their kids in the local school system, Jani and Bob homeschooled Bowe and his sister. Devout Calvinists, they taught the children for six hours a day, instructing them in religious thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. "Ethics and morality would be constant verbiage in our conversations," his father recalls. "Bowe was definitely instilled with truth. He was very philosophical about perceiving ethics."

**MICHAEL HASTINGS**, a contributing editor, wrote "The Runaway General," about Gen. Stanley McChrystal, in RS 1108. Additional reporting by Matthew Farwell, who served in Afghanistan.



## A Boy's Life

Growing up in the mountains of Idaho (at left, with his sister, Sky, and his father, Bob), Bowe learned to shoot a .22 rifle and to ride horses. He developed a love of dirt bikes (above), and immersed himself in boy's adventure tales. Rejected by the French Foreign Legion, he fantasized about the creation of a "special ops unit" to kill warlords in Africa.

By the age of five, Bowe had also learned to shoot a .22 rifle and to ride horses. He de-

veloped a love for dirt bikes and immersed himself in boy's adventure tales - anything that had to do with sailing and the ocean - as well as cartoons. His favorite was *Beetle Bailey*, the comic-strip antihero who shambles through life in the Army as a permanent fuck-up.

By the time he was 16, Bowe had grown restless with his home-schooling - and his parents. He began to explore the wider world, and became obsessed with learning how to fence. At a nearby fencing studio, which also offered ballet classes, he was recruited by a beautiful local girl to be a "lifter" - the guy who holds the girl aloft in a ballet sequence. He soon moved in with the girl, whose family owned a tea shop in Ketchum, and made it his second home. The matriarch of the household, Kim Harrison, introduced him to Buddhism and Tarot cards. Bowe repaid his new family by doing construction work on their home. "To me, it was the normal path teenagers take," says Bob. "Like going to college - you get into all this stuff."

At 20, Bowe went even farther afield in search of the kind of boy's adventure that had mesmerized him for years: He decided to join the French Foreign Legion, the infantry force made up of foreigners who want "to start a new life," as the legion's recruiting website puts it. He traveled to Paris and started to learn French, but his application was rejected. "He was absolutely devastated when the French Foreign Legion didn't take him," Bob says. "They just didn't want an American homeschooled in Idaho. They just said no way." Bowe pored over a survival and combat handbook written by a former member of the British special forces, and he gravitated toward the TV show *Man vs. Wild*, hosted by another legendary British soldier. "This became his role model," his father says. "He is Bear Grylls in his own mind."

Returning home from Europe, Bowe drifted for the next few years, working mainly as a barista at Zaney's, a local coffee shop in Hailey. But he kept dreaming of ways to pursue something bigger. In 2008, he spoke to a family friend who was working as a missionary in Uganda about going over to Africa to teach "self-defense techniques" to villagers being targeted by brutal militias like the Lord's Resistance Army. He and his father even

fantasized about the creation of a special-operations unit to "kill these fucks" in Africa, imagining that "someone needed to run an op with some military people dressed up like U.N. people" to take out warlords in Darfur and Sudan. Before a spot in the friend's missionary program could open up, though, Bowe had decided on a different adventure.

One day that spring, Bowe called his mother. "Mom, I need to talk to you and Dad about something," he said. He stopped by the house that Saturday, when his father was home from work.

"I'm thinking about joining the Army," Bowe told his parents.

"You're thinking about joining?" his father asked. "Or you already signed on the dotted line?"

"Well, yeah," Bowe admitted.

Bowe's mother wished he had enlisted in a different branch, like the Navy, that wouldn't have put him on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. His father did what he always did with his son's dreams. "I just tried to be supportive," Bob says.

But what Bowe found in the Army, according to his parents, was a "deception" — one that started from the moment he was recruited. Bowe had been enticed to join the Army, they say, with the promise that he would be going overseas to help Afghan villagers rebuild their lives and learn to defend themselves — "the whole COIN thing," says Bob, citing the shorthand for America's strategy of counterinsurgency. "We were given a fictitious picture, an artificially created picture of what we were doing in Afghanistan."

**A**FTER 16 WEEKS OF TRAINING, Bowe graduated from infantry school in Fort Benning, Georgia, in the fall of 2008. While others in his training unit — A Company 2-58 — used their weekend passes to hit up strip clubs, Bowe hung out at Barnes & Noble and read books. He was already an expert shot from his days firing his .22 in the mountains of Idaho. When his parents attended the graduation, the drill sergeant told them, "Bowe was good to go when he got here." After completing the course, Bowe was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division in Fort Richardson, Alaska, not far from Anchorage. He arrived in October 2008.

At first, according to soldiers in his unit, Bowe seemed to embrace Army life. "He showed up, looked like a normal Joe," says former Specialist Jason Fry, who is now studying for a master's in theology. "When he first got to the unit, he was the leadership's pet. He read the *Ranger Handbook* like no other. Some people resented him for it." Bowe kept to himself, doing physical training on his own. "He never hung out with anyone, always in the

background, never wanted to be in front of anything," says Fry. He surrounded himself with piles of books, including *Three Cups of Tea*, about a humanitarian crusade to educate girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as instructions on Zen meditation and an introductory ethics handbook with writings from Aristotle, Augustine, Kant and Hume.

After a month in Alaska, Bowe and his unit embarked for the National Training Center in Southern California to prepare for war. The NTC is a massive military installation in the Mojave Desert where real-life combat situations are simulated under the most difficult conditions, often in extreme heat. It was a brutal experience for the platoon, and Bowe's unit struggled from the beginning. "The first week is incredibly stressful," a second lieutenant in

calling a joke that Bowe played. "Bergdahl was sneaking up on him like he was practicing techniques for the Battle of Wanat, on the other side." The U.S. base at Wanat, a remote village in Afghanistan, had been overrun by the Taliban four months earlier, leaving nine Americans dead and 27 wounded. It was one of the most deadly battles since the start of the war.

Bowe earned the nickname "SF," short for Special Forces — but it wasn't a compliment. "He loved pipe tobacco, didn't drink, smoke cigarettes," says Fry. "He did it more for the look." Fancey, now a captain stationed in North Carolina, recalls Bowe as "quiet. He wasn't one of the troublemakers — he was focused and well-behaved." While other soldiers spent Thanksgiving at the NTC playing PSP and reading *Playboy*, Bowe sat alone on his cot, studying maps of Afghanistan. He was also made a SAW gunner, responsible for providing automatic firepower for the squad, and he did exercises with his cumbersome 15-pound machine gun as though he were curling weights at the gym. "We saw him, and were like, 'Whoa, Mr. Intensity,'" says Fancey.

By the time the monthlong training session ended, the platoon was so notorious for screwing up that it had become a convenient scapegoat. At the firing range one day, another company failed to bring ammunition, and Bowe's unit took the flak. "We were heckled and blamed for not being prepared," Fancey wrote. "All said and done, NTC was an eye-opener and a bit of a disappointing one, at that."

It was also a disappointment to Bowe. He had entered the Army for the adventure, as a substitute for the French Foreign Legion, and here he was, shackled to a bunch of goof-offs. Bowe told Fry he didn't think the other soldiers in the unit were competent to fight. "He wanted to be a mercenary, wanted to be a free gun," says Fry. "He had a notion he was a survivalist, claimed he knew how to survive with nothing because he grew up in Idaho. He had stories of him doing crazy shit out in the woods for weeks in Idaho."

Over Christmas that year, Bowe went home to Hailey for the last time. He talked to his father and gave him his last will and testament. "He wanted to be buried at sea," his father recalls. "Typical. It's just this figment of his imagination. That's how he was seeing himself. This kid, from when he was 18, was hanging out with the elite. That's where his habits came from. He was living in a novel."

Returning to Alaska after Christmas, Bowe said something that would stick with Fry months later, long after they arrived in Afghanistan. "Before we deployed, when we were on Rear D, him and I were talking about what it would be like," Fry recalls. Bowe looked at his friend and made no bones about his plans. "If this

## BOWE JOINED THE ARMY FOR ADVENTURE — THEN FOUND HIMSELF SHACKLED TO A BUNCH OF GOOF-OFFS.

the unit, Stephen Fancey, wrote on his blog. "I get overworked to the point where I start to get sick with a fever."

In his blog posts, which have since been removed from the Web, Fancey detailed a unit that seemed to have almost no discipline. The company's first sergeant, Fancey wrote, "calls the Captain a quitter, then calls me a quitter. Picture a 2nd LT screaming at a 1SG, who is screaming back in broken puerto-rican-fied English, and about 5 Privates sitting quietly in terror." As the combat simulations continued, the sergeant's behavior grew even more disturbing. He refused to go to the bathroom, preferring to pee into a Gatorade bottle by his bed, and he obsessed over his desire for a Diet Coke. After one botched operation, according to Fancey's blog, the first sergeant just gave up. "I need a Coca-Cola," he said. Then, upset at how screwed up the operation had become, he tore off his body armor and stormed off to his tent, screaming, "Fuck 'dis 'chit!"

Bowe's behavior, too, seemed odd at times. Fry remembers hearing "all kinds of crazy stories about him." He often came across more like a boy on an adventure than a soldier preparing for war. "My buddy was on an op, pulling guard duty," says Fry, re-

deployment is lame," Bowe said, "I'm just going to walk off into the mountains of Pakistan."

**I**N MARCH 2009, BOWE'S PLATOON arrived in Paktika, a province in eastern Afghanistan. Located on the border of Pakistan, the region is a stark landscape of imposing mountains and crushing poverty. According to the Army, 99 percent of Paktika is rural, and only six percent of households have access to electricity. The violence brought by the war has been equally extreme, with some 134 soldiers – including famed NFL player Pat Tillman – losing their lives in the province since the beginning of the conflict.

By that spring, when Bowe's unit arrived, the entire U.S. policy in Afghanistan appeared to be in chaos from the top down. President Obama had just fired Gen. David McKiernan, replacing him with Gen. Stanley McChrystal, and there was no longer a clear strategy in place.

The prolonged aspect of the war was also forcing the Pentagon to send more and more recruits who were unprepared and undisciplined, like Bowe's unit. To meet its recruiting goals, the Army had lowered its standards for intellectual aptitude, and allowed more waivers for recruits with felony convictions and drug problems. "One of every five recruits required a waiver to join the service, leading military analysts to conclude that the Army has lowered its standards," Col. Jeffrey McClain wrote in a definitive study for the Army War College in 2008, the year many in Bowe's unit joined up.

Bowe's platoon of some 25 men – undermanned by more than a third – was sent to a small combat outpost called Mast Malak, near the village of Yaya Kheyl, where they were supposed to conduct counterinsurgency operations, attempting to win the local population over to the side of the Americans. Bowe had a serious staph infection in his leg, so he arrived at the outpost late. With his customary zeal, he'd been preparing for the deployment by learning how to speak Pashto and reading Russian military manuals. Almost as soon as he joined his fellow soldiers, he began to gravitate away from his unit. "He spent more time with the Afghans than he did with his platoon," Fry says. His father, recalling that time, would later describe his son to military investigators as "psychologically isolated."

The discipline problems that had plagued Bowe's unit back home only got worse when immersed in the fog of war. From the start, everything seemed to go wrong. In April, Lt. Fancey was removed from his post for clashing with a superior officer. He was replaced by Sgt. 1st Class Larry Hein, who had never held such a

command – a move that left the remote outpost with no officers. According to four soldiers in the battalion, the removal of Fancey was quickly followed by a collapse in unit morale and an almost complete breakdown of authority.

The unruly situation was captured by Sean Smith, a British documentary filmmaker with *The Guardian* who spent a month embedded with Bowe's unit. His footage shows a bunch of soldiers who no longer give a shit: breaking even the most basic rules of combat, like wearing baseball caps on patrol instead of helmets. In footage from a raid on a family compound, an old Afghan woman screams at the unit, "Look at these cruel people!" One soldier bitches about what he sees as the cowardice of the Afghan villagers he is supposed to be protecting: "They say like, the Taliban comes down and aggravated their

time, Bowe wrote his family, was spent near a village that "was not too friendly to Americans" because it had been attacked by the Taliban. "So the elders were telling us to leave," he reported, "because the Taliban was there, and we couldn't leave because command finely decided that they would fly in the parts (one MRAP needing a new engine) and would rebuild the MRAPs up there."

Once the MRAPs were finally fixed, the unit started to leave the mountains, only to be hit by yet another IED – the third of the mission – and to come under a blistering attack from rocket-propelled grenades. "It was at the point that the guys were beginning to climb into the trucks that the first RPG hit about 30m away from them," Bowe recounted, "and then the RPKs and the AKs began to splatter bullets on us, and all around us, the gunners were only able to see a few of them, and so were firing blindly the rest of the time, up into the trees and rocks. The .50 went down on the first shot on the truck I was in, and I had to hand up my SAW for the gunner to use. I sat there and watched, there was nothing else I was allowed to do."

No soldiers were killed in the ambush, but Bowe blamed the screw-up on his superiors: "Because command were too stupid to make up their minds of what to do," he wrote, "we were left to sit out in the middle of nowhere with no support to come till late mourning the next day." He concluded his e-mail with a nod to the absurdity of the situation: "The end of the 8 hour mission that took five days, and so here I am. But Afghanistan mountains are really beautiful!"

**O**VER THE NEXT MONTH, AS he saw more of the war firsthand, Bowe's e-mails to his family lost their sense of absurdity and took on a darker edge. In one heartbreaking incident at the end of May, an Afghan official and four of his children were killed in a Taliban attack. The bodies were moved to Bowe's outpost, along with a wounded Afghan police officer.

In early June, after photographs taken by Sean Smith appeared in *The Guardian*, Bowe's unit got reamed out by its commander for its lack of discipline. Bowe's squad leader, Sgt. Greg Leatherman, was demoted, and two other sergeants in the squad were reassigned. According to Fancey, one was made "a gate guard for the rest of the deployment." As often happens in the Army, senior officers were going unpunished for screw-ups like the MRAP mission, while lower-ranking men paid the price for minor infractions.

The unit, for its part, continued to bungle even the most basic aspects of military

## "I HAVE SEEN THEIR IDEAS," BOWE E-MAILED ABOUT THE WAR, "AND I AM ASHAMED TO EVEN BE AMERICAN."

town and harasses them.... Why don't you kill those motherfuckers? All of you have AKs. If someone is going into my hometown, I know my town wouldn't stand for that shit. I'd be like, 'Fuck you, you're dead.' Another soldier laments, "These people just want to be left alone." A third agrees: "They got dicked with by the Russians for 17 years, and now we're here."

During the middle of May, Bowe went out on one of his first major missions. He described it in a detailed e-mail to his family dated May 23rd, 2009. What started as an eight-hour mission, Bowe recounted, ended up taking five days.

While another unit was setting up a night ambush in the mountains, an MRAP – the \$1.5 million armored vehicle designed to protect soldiers from the roadside bombs being used by the Taliban – got hit with an IED. Bowe's platoon was deployed to escort a tow truck to get it down off the mountain. But on the way to escort the truck, an MRAP in Bowe's own platoon was hit by an IED. The unit found itself stuck in the mountains for four days, guarding the wreckage while their commanders debated whether to fly in the parts needed to fix the vehicles. Some of

duty. During the last week of June, the platoon spent a day resupplying at Forward Operating Base Sharana. When someone in the unit lost his weapon, everyone in the platoon had to drop what they were doing and look for it. To make matters worse, on an earlier trip to Sharana, 10 members of the platoon had been poached to pull guard duty at another base, leaving the unit even more undermanned than usual.

Then, on June 25th, Bowe's battalion suffered its first casualty of the deployment. A popular officer, 1st Lt. Brian Bradshaw, was killed in a blast from a roadside bomb near the village of Yaya Kheyl, not far from the outpost. Though Bradshaw

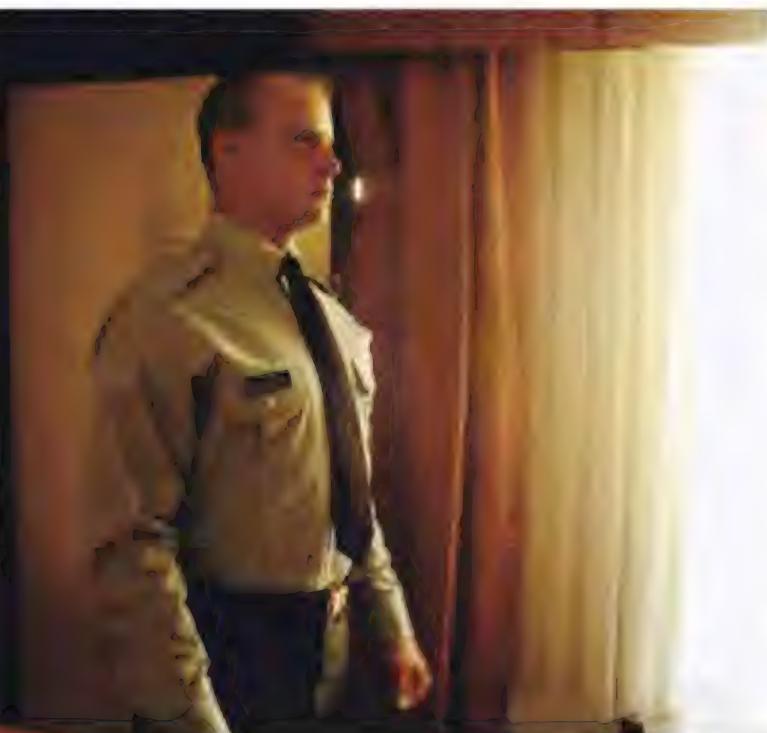
said, had been forced to move to another company, and "one of the biggest shit bags is being put in charge of the team." His battalion commander was a "conceited old fool." The military system itself was broken: "In the US army you are cut down for being honest...but if you are a conceited brown nosing shit bag you will be allowed to do what ever you want, and you will be handed your higher rank... The system is wrong. I am ashamed to be an american. And the title of US soldier is just the lie of fools." The soldiers he actually admired were planning on leaving: "The US army is the biggest joke the world has to laugh at. It is the army of

traumatic event: seeing an Afghan child run over by an MRAP. "We don't even care when we hear each other talk about running their children down in the dirt streets with our armored trucks.... We make fun of them in front of their faces, and laugh at them for not understanding we are insulting them."

Bowe concluded his e-mail with what, in another context, might read as a suicide note. "I am sorry for everything," he wrote. "The horror that is america is disgusting." Then he signed off with a final message to his mother and father. "There are a few more boxes coming to you guys," he said, referring to his uniform and books, which he had already packed up and shipped off. "Feel free to open them, and use them."

On June 27th, at 10:43 p.m., Bob Bergdahl responded to his son's final message not long after he received it. His subject line was titled: OBEY YOUR CONSCIENCE!

"Dear Bowe," he wrote. "In matters of life and death, and especially at war, it is never safe to ignore ones' conscience. Ethics demands obedience to our conscience. It is best to also have a systematic oral defense of what our conscience demands. Stand with like minded men when possible." He signed it simply "dad."



#### DRESSED TO KILL

Bowe prepares for graduation from basic training at Fort Benning in October 2008.

was in a different company, the 24-year-old's death rocked the unit, shattering the sense of invulnerability that accompanies those who have just arrived in country. Bowe's father believes that Bradshaw and Bowe had grown close at the National Training Center, and his death darkened his son's mood.

It was all too much for Bowe. On June 27th, he sent what would be his final e-mail to his parents. It was a lengthy message documenting his complete disillusionment with the war effort. He opened it by addressing it simply to "mom, dad."

"The future is too good to waste on lies," Bowe wrote. "And life is way too short to care for the damnation of others, as well as to spend it helping fools with their ideas that are wrong. I have seen their ideas and I am ashamed to even be american. The horror of the self-righteous arrogance that they thrive in. It is all revolting."

The e-mail went on to list a series of complaints: Three good sergeants, Bowe

liars, backstabbers, fools, and bullies. The few good SGTs are getting out as soon as they can, and they are telling us privates to do the same."

In the second-to-last paragraph of the e-mail, Bowe wrote about his broader disgust with America's approach to the war – an effort, on the ground, that seemed to represent the exact opposite of the kind of concerted campaign to win the "hearts and minds" of average Afghans envisioned by counterinsurgency strategists. "I am sorry for everything here," Bowe told his parents. "These people need help, yet what they get is the most conceited country in the world telling them that they are nothing and that they are stupid, that they have no idea how to live." He then referred to what his parents believe may have been a formative, possibly

ORDINARY SOLDIERS, ESPECIALLY raw recruits facing combat for the first time, respond to the horror of war in all sorts of ways. Some take their own lives: After years of seemingly endless war and repeat deployments, active-duty soldiers in the U.S. Army are currently committing suicide at a record rate, 25 percent higher than the civilian population. Other soldiers lash out with unauthorized acts of violence: the staff sergeant charged with murdering 17 Afghan civilians in their homes last March; the notorious "Kill Team" of U.S. soldiers who went on a shooting spree in 2010, murdering civilians for sport and taking parts of their corpses for trophies. Many come home permanently traumatized, unable to block out the nightmares.

Bowe Bergdahl had a different response. He decided to walk away.

In the early-morning hours of June 30th, according to soldiers in the unit, Bowe approached his team leader not long after he got off guard duty and asked his superior a simple question: If I were to leave the base, would it cause problems if I took my sensitive equipment?

Yes, his team leader responded – if you took your rifle and night-vision goggles, that would cause problems.

Bowe returned to his barracks, a roughly built bunker of plywood and sandbags. He gathered up water, a knife, his digital



camera and his diary. Then he slipped off the outpost.

Bowe might have spent his childhood hiking in the mountains of Idaho, but the terrain he now faced was nothing like back home. To get to Pakistan, he would first have to descend some 1,500 feet from the mountain outpost and skirt the village of Yaya Kheyl, a town known for harboring Taliban. At that hour, there would be few people on the main road through Paktika, dubbed "Route Audi" by U.S. forces. But as dawn broke, a stream of motorbikes and pedestrians would start to pass by. Alone, white-skinned and likely wearing his Army uniform, Bowe would have stood out immediately.

If Bowe made it through town, the next step would be even more daunting: He would have to slog eight miles through deep sand so fine that soldiers called it "moondust." If he was lucky, he might pick up a path used by Kuchi nomadic tribesmen to bring their sheep to market. Along the way, Bowe would pass grave sites: tall stacks of rocks marked by bright flags. Then he'd be forced to climb back up the switchbacks to Omna, where his platoon had been bogged down on its first major mission, traverse the Bermel Plateau, and once again scale mountain peaks to cross the border into Pakistan.

At 9:00 that morning, the acting platoon leader, Sgt. 1st Class Larry Hein, called in over the radio to report a missing

**"THESE PEOPLE NEED HELP"**  
Bowe (right), at his unit's remote outpost in eastern Afghanistan

soldier. According to sources in the battalion, this was the last thing Hein needed, given all the scrutiny the unit had been under. The men needed a break. Instead, they had to find a member of their platoon. "That was a shitty week for all of them," says one soldier in the unit.

By 11:37 a.m., a Predator drone was on station, monitoring the area with a call sign of VOODOO. At 2:10 p.m., a Pathfinder and a team of tracking dogs arrived at the small outpost. Five minutes later, another Predator drone began circling the area. At 2:42, Guardrail – an electronic intercept plane run by the same clandestine Army agency that killed Pablo Escobar – captured low-level voice intercepts picked up from radio or cellphone traffic. An American soldier with a camera was reportedly looking for someone who spoke English.

The search quickly escalated. No one knew whether Bowe was a deserter, a prisoner or a casualty. At that point he was simply listed as DUSTWUN – short for "Duty Status: Whereabouts Unknown." But either way, the Army wanted him back, fast. At 4:42 that afternoon, Col. Michael Howard, the senior officer responsible for three eastern provinces in Afghanistan, ordered that "all opera-

tions will cease until the missing soldier is found. All assets will be focused on the DUSTWUN situation and sustainment operations."

Within an hour, two F-18s were circling overhead. Afghan forces passed along intelligence that a U.S. soldier had been captured by the Taliban. By that evening, two F-15s – call sign DUDE-21 – had joined the search. A few minutes later, according to files obtained by WikiLeaks, a radio transmission intercepted by U.S. forces stated that the Taliban had captured three civilians and one U.S. soldier. The battalion leading the manhunt entered and searched three compounds in the area, but found nothing significant to report.

The next morning, more than 24 hours after Bowe had vanished, U.S. intelligence intercepted a conversation between two Taliban fighters:

"I SWEAR THAT I HAVE NOT HEARD ANYTHING YET. WHAT HAPPENED. IS THAT TRUE THAT THEY CAPTURED AN AMERICAN GUY?"

"YES THEY DID. HE IS ALIVE. THERE IS NO WHERE HE CAN GO (LOL)"

"IS HE STILL ALIVE?"

"YES HE IS ALIVE. BUT I DONT HAVE THE WHOLE STORY. DONT KNOW IF THEY WERE FIGHTING. ALL I KNOW IF THEY WERE FIGHTING. ALL I KNOW THAT THEY CAPTURE HIM ALIVE AND THEY ARE WITH HIM RIGHT NOW."

Then another intercept was picked up:

"CUT THE HEAD OFF"

Later that evening, a final intercept confirmed that Bowe had been captured by the Taliban, who were preparing an ambush for the search party.

"WE ARE WAITING FOR THEM."

"LOL THEY KNOW WHERE HE IS  
BUT THEY KEEP GOING TO WRONG  
AREA."

"OK SET UP THE WORK FOR THEM."

"YES WE HAVE A LOT OF IED ON  
THE ROAD."

"GOD WILLING WE WILL DO IT."

"WE WERE ATTACKING THE  
POST HE WAS SITTING TAKING  
EXPLETIVE HE HAD NO GUN WITH  
HIM. HE WAS TAKING EXPLETIVE,  
HE HAS NOT CLEANED HIS  
BUTT YET."

"WHAT SHAME FOR THEM."

"YES LOOK THEY HAVE ALL  
AMERICANS. ANA HELICOPTERS  
THE PLANES ARE LOOKING FOR  
HIM."

"I THINK HE IS BIG SHOT THAT WHY  
THEY ARE LOOKING FOR HIM."

A third voice chimed in:

"CAN YOU GUYS MAKE A VIDEO OF  
HIM AND ANNOUNCE IT ALL OVER  
AFGHANISTAN THAT WE HAVE ONE  
OF THE AMERICANS."

"WE ALREADY HAVE A VIDEO OF  
HIM."

The next day, American forces had a chance to free Bowe. The battalion operations officer, call sign GERONIMO 3, met with two tribal elders from the nearby village. The elders had been asked by the Taliban to arrange a trade with U.S. forces. The insurgents wanted 15 of their jailed fighters released, along with an unidentified sum of money, in exchange for Bowe. The officer hedged, unwilling or unable to make such a bargain, and no deal was struck. Instead, the Army ordered all units stationed in the eastern

half of Afghanistan – known as RC East, in military jargon – to join the search for Bowe.

On July 4th, the search effort got a break: Bowe was spotted in a village in Ghazni, about 15 miles across the mountains to the west. He was wearing khaki, with a bag covering his head, and he was being driven in a black Toyota Corolla, escorted by three to five motorcycles. But by the time troops arrived to investigate, it was too late. That was the last time that Bowe would be seen until the first propaganda video, released later that month.

## BOWE GATHERED UP SOME WATER, A KNIFE, HIS CAMERA AND DIARY. THEN HE SLIPPED OFF THE BASE.

Over the next few months, Bowe's unit would be consumed with trying to find him. When Fancey, Bowe's former platoon leader, heard the news at the base where he had been reassigned, he couldn't believe what had happened to his former private. "I was like, 'What? You're joking, right?' The next few weeks, it was like we were in a movie. It was like, this shouldn't be real."

**B**ACK IN IDAHO, ON THE AFTERNOON of June 30th, Bowe's mother, Jani, heard her dog Rufus barking. The gate to the driveway was closed. On the other side stood a pickup truck flanked by three men in Army uniforms. They

were from the Idaho National Guard, and they'd driven down from Boise.

"Oh," she thought. "Why are they standing there?" Then the panic struck. "No, no, no," she thought. "He just got there."

Jani approached the men. "What do you want?" she asked.

"Is your husband home?" they replied. "Do you have anybody home with you?"

She asked what they wanted.

"We can't tell you," they said.

She told them her husband didn't have a cellphone, so she called UPS, where Bob has worked for 28 years. Then UPS texted him on their internal message system. Bob met Jani and the three officers in the parking lot of the UPS depot, about 10 miles from the Bergdahls' home.

"It's not the worst news," an officer told the couple. "As of this morning, they told me your son has been listed as DUSTWUN. There was a 100 percent accountability muster this morning. Your son is off post. He's missing." Bob got back in his truck and finished his UPS route. It was only another couple of hours, he said, and there was no one around to replace him.

During the first week of Bowe's capture, his parents believed he would be rescued. "We thought they'd get him quickly," Jani recalls. His name hadn't been released publicly, and the couple had only told their close family about his disappearance. At their daughter's Fourth of July party a few days later, they told their friends that Bowe was missing and that it was about to come out in the media. On July 7th, after Bowe's name was officially released, the national press descended on Hailey, gathering at Zaney's, the coffee shop where Bowe had worked.

It wasn't long, though, before his parents began to grow frustrated by how the government was treating them in the midst of the ordeal. The Army, they felt, was subtly pressuring them not to speak to the press, and they were required to sign a nondisclosure agreement with the National Security Agency in order to view classified and top-secret material. In addition,

### THE TALIBAN TAPES

Bowe Bergdahl's captors have released four propaganda videos of the U.S. Army private



**07/19/09**

In the first video, only a few weeks after his capture, Bowe still appears fit and well.



**12/25/09**

Dressed in a military uniform, Bowe was required to spout anti-American lines.



**04/07/10**

Sporting a beard, Bowe pleads for his release: "This war isn't worth the waste of human life."



**05/04/11**

Gaunt and underweight, Bowe is flanked by a man who appears to be a Taliban commander.

# PRISONER OF WAR

Bob believes the military began monitoring their phones in case the kidnappers called — standard procedure in a hostage situation, but one that also enabled the U.S. military to keep tabs on the family.

Things soon got worse. Ralph Peters, an action-thriller writer who serves as a "strategic analyst" for Fox News, took to the air to condemn Bowe as an "apparent deserter." The Taliban, he declared, could save the United States on "legal bills" by executing him. Horrified by such comments, Bob and Jani told their military liaison that they didn't want the Army to mount an operation to rescue Bowe, fearful that he'd be killed — either by accident, or even on purpose, by an aggrieved soldier or the U.S. military itself. There have certainly been soldiers who have joined the drumbeat of hatred against Bowe: A recent Facebook post from one soldier in his unit called for his execution. Worried that any further public attention might put Bowe at greater risk, his parents decided to remain silent, releasing a statement to their local newspaper asking the press to respect their privacy.

In what appears to be an unprecedented move, the Pentagon also scrambled to shut down any public discussion of Bowe. Members of Bowe's brigade were required to sign nondisclosure agreements as part of their paperwork to leave Afghanistan. The agreement, according to Capt. Fancey, forbids them to discuss any "personnel recovery" efforts — an obvious reference to Bowe. According to administration sources, both the Pentagon and the White House also pressured major news outlets like *The New York Times* and the AP to steer clear of mentioning Bowe's name to avoid putting him at further risk. (The White House was afraid hard-line elements could execute him to scuttle peace talks, officials involved in the press negotiations say.) Faced with the wall of official silence, Bob and Jani began to worry that the Pentagon wasn't doing all that it could to get their son back. As Bowe's sister, Sky, wrote in a private e-mail: "I am afraid our government here in D.C. would like nothing better but to sweep PFC Bergdahl under the rug and wash their hands of him."

**T**HE FIRST PROPAGANDA video of Bowe surfaced in July 2009. It was eventually followed by three others — the most recent from May of last year. Mullah Omar, the spiritual leader of the Taliban, released a statement in September 2010 claiming Bowe as a prison-

er — an example, he said, of America's "humiliation and disgrace."

The videos show a steep decline in Bowe's appearance and mental health. In the first two videos he displays a measured calm, a kind of doped-out serenity that is missing from the most recent installments. Each is typical jihadist propaganda, using Bowe to recite lines criticizing American foreign policy. Intelligence reports suggest that Bowe was moved into Pakistan sometime in late 2009 or 2010, where he is being held by the Haqqani network, an insurgent group with links to Al Qaeda

such a struggle that it took five militants to overpower him. "He fought like a boxer," a Taliban fighter who had seen Bowe told Sami Yousafzai, a *Newsweek* reporter with legendary contacts among the Taliban. According to Yousafzai, sources among the militants say that Bowe is now "kept shackled at night" and is being moved back and forth across the border to keep his position from being discovered.

The Pentagon insists that it is "doing everything possible" to get Bowe home, and a large photo of the captive soldier hangs in CENTCOM headquarters, a daily reminder to those working to free him. Last year, according to officials close to the negotiations, Bowe's name took center stage during peace talks with the Taliban. The negotiations are being handled by an interagency team comprised of representatives from the State Department, the Defense Department and the White House, who have traveled to Germany and Qatar to meet with the Taliban. (One of Obama's top advisers on national security, Denis McDonough, has been intimately involved in the talks.) In return for Bowe, U.S. officials have offered to swap five of the 3,000 Afghan prisoners being held by American forces. At least one of those prisoners, according to a senior U.S. official familiar with the talks, is more or less a moderate. "I've seen the files, and it's slim," says the official. "Things like, he used to meet with Iranian officials when he worked in the government of Herat. That's nothing."

Officially, Bowe remains a soldier in good standing in the United States Army. He has continued to receive promotions over the past three years, based on his time in uniform, and he now holds the rank of sergeant. Unofficially, however, his status within the military is sharply contested. According to officials familiar with the internal debate, there are those in both Congress and the Pentagon who view Bowe as a deserter, and perhaps even a traitor. As with everything in Washington these days, the sharp political discord has complicated efforts to secure his release.

"The Hill is giving State and the White House shit," says one senior administration source. "The political consequences are being used as leverage in the policy debate." According to White House sources, Marc Grossman, who replaced Richard Holbrooke as special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, was given a direct warning by the president's opponents in Congress about trading Bowe for five Taliban prisoners during an election year. "They keep telling me it's going to be Obama's Willie Horton moment," Grossman warned the



## "I'LL BRING HIM HOME MYSELF"

Bob Bergdahl has considered going to Pakistan to ask for his son's release.

that has joined the Taliban in fighting the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. It's also a group that, before the attacks of September 11th, was funded by the CIA. The network, which now has ties to the Pakistani government, is likely living under the protection of the Pakistani intelligence service, as Osama bin Laden and other top Al Qaeda leaders did for years.

Bowe's parents believe that he has been moved repeatedly to avoid the constant drone strikes along the Pakistan border, and is possibly being kept close to high-level leaders of the Haqqani network. For his part, Bowe does not appear to be a willing hostage. Last year, in August or September, he reportedly managed to escape. When he was recaptured, he put up

White House. The threat was as ugly as it was clear: The president's political enemies were prepared to use the release of violent prisoners to paint Obama as a Dukakis-like appeaser, just as Republicans did to the former Massachusetts governor during the 1988 campaign. In response, a White House official advised Grossman that he should ignore the politics of the swap and concentrate solely on the policy.

"Frankly, we don't give a shit why he left," says one White House official. "He's an American soldier. We want to bring him home."

**T**HE TENSIONS CAME TO A boil in January, when administration officials went to Capitol Hill to brief a handful of senators on the possibility of a prisoner exchange. The meeting, which excluded staffers, took place in a new secure conference room in the Capitol visitor center. According to sources in the briefing, the discussion sparked a sharp exchange between Senators John McCain and John Kerry, both of whom were decorated for their service in Vietnam. McCain, who endured almost six years of captivity as a prisoner of war, threw a fit at the prospect of releasing five Taliban detainees.

"They're the five biggest murderers in world history!" McCain fumed.

Kerry, who supported the transfer, thought that was going a bit far. "John," he said, "the five biggest murderers in the world?"

McCain was furious at the rebuke. "They killed Americans!" he responded. "I suppose Senator Kerry is OK with that?"

McCain reluctantly came around on the prisoner exchange, according to those present at the meeting, but he has continued to speak out against negotiating with the Taliban. Opposition has also come from Sen. Saxby Chambliss, a Republican from Georgia who won election with a vicious smear campaign against former Sen. Max Cleland, a decorated Vietnam veteran who lost three limbs in the war. Chambliss, according to Bowe's father, has insisted that America shouldn't make a prisoner trade for a "deserter."

Some top-level officials within the administration, including Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, are very wary about making a swap for Bowe. "Panetta and Hillary don't give a shit about getting him home," says one senior U.S. official involved in the negotiations. "They want to be able to say they COINed their way out of Afghanistan, or whatever, so it doesn't look like they are cutting and running." (Both Clinton and Panetta, by law, would have to sign off on any exchange.) As with Vietnam, many in the military are resisting

any attempt to end the war. "Even after Robert Bales" – the Army staff sergeant charged with massacring 17 Afghan civilians in March – "they are making the argument that the war is turning a corner," says this official. "They don't realize that the mission is changing. We don't need all those U.S. soldiers there anymore."

Those in the Pentagon who oppose the prisoner exchange have insisted that the deal would send the wrong message to America's enemies. "The Pentagon is making the argument that American soldiers would become targets for kidnapping," says a senior administration official. "We pushed back on that. They already are – the Taliban and Al Qaeda have been using their resources to kidnap Americans for years." Prisoner exchanges take place at the ground level all the time in Afghanistan, and Gen. David Petraeus, now the

ping.) But at the last moment, the Taliban themselves balked at the deal, which stipulates that the detainees would not be allowed to leave the country of Qatar after their release. In March, faced with internal opposition over cutting a deal with the Americans, the Taliban abruptly suspended the peace talks. "Bowe Bergdahl has been a topic in any meeting we ever had with the Taliban," says a senior State Department official involved with the negotiations. "The Taliban suspended the talks on March 15th. We have not been in any contact with them since."

In a sense, Bowe represents a threat to anyone who wants to see the war continue – be they Taliban militants or Pentagon generals. Once the last American POW is released, there will be few obstacles standing in the way of a negotiated settlement. "It's the hard-liners on both sides who want to keep this thing going," says a White House official. "The Taliban is struggling with its own hard-liners. They need space, and this confidence-building measure could give them space."

There is still hope that a deal could get done – a hope that persists in the White House, in Bowe's old unit, and among Bowe's family. Over Memorial Day weekend, Bob and Jani Bergdahl traveled to Washington, D.C. A POW-advocacy organization called Rolling Thunder had asked Bob to give a speech at the group's annual gathering at the National Mall, the famous park across from the U.S. Capitol that hosted some of the most powerful anti-war demonstrations of the Vietnam War. The parents accepted the invitation out of desperation. Bob has considered going over to Pakistan – he's grown a bushy beard, and he has sent his own YouTube video, directed at the Taliban, asking for his son's release. "I'll talk to them," he says. "I'll bring him home myself."

Bob and Jani had thought they might meet the president during their trip to Washington, but that didn't happen. Instead, Bob took to the microphone to speak directly to America, and, perhaps, to his son. In front of the podium crouched a man in a bamboo tiger cage, a symbolic piece of theater the organization presents each year to remind everyone of prisoners of war from another era.

"My son is not in a cage, but he is in chains," Bob said. "Bowe, if you can hear me, you are not forgotten, and so help me God, we will bring you home. Your family has not forgotten you, your hometown has not forgotten you, Idaho has not forgotten you, and thanks to all the people here, Washington, D.C., will not forget you."

When he was finished, he grasped the hand of the man in the tiger cage. The man looked startled. It seemed like a long time since anyone had stepped forward to acknowledge he was there. 7

## JOHN McCAIN THREW A FIT OVER TRADING TALIBAN DETAINEES FOR BOWE: "THEY KILLED AMERICANS!"

head of the CIA, has pointed out in discussions about Bowe that U.S. forces made distasteful swaps in Iraq – including one involving Qais Khazali, a Shiite extremist who orchestrated the kidnapping and execution of four U.S. soldiers in Karbala in 2007. Even a hard-line Israeli nationalist like Benjamin Netanyahu has recognized the value of a single soldier: In October, the prime minister agreed to free 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli corporal who had been held captive by Hamas for five years. The move was overwhelmingly supported by the majority of Israelis. "The Israelis really care about the value of one life," says a senior U.S. official. "Does the American public?"

Despite the objections to the swap, U.S. officials involved in the negotiations this winter say they were on the verge of completing the deal to free Bowe. The White House had worked up talking points about Bowe, and was ready to go public about the exchange. (According to administration officials, the Pentagon insisted that the talking points note that Bowe had walked off base, to underscore that U.S. soldiers are not an easy target for kidnap-

LATE ONE NIGHT  
MR. AWESOME-  
DELICIOUSNESS

MET  
MS. WHOLE-GRAIN-  
GOODNESS AT A  
PARTY.

MEET THEIR  
LOVE  
CHILD.



16g of whole grain per serving\*

Smart carbohydrates

# Reviews

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## Fiona's Extraordinary Angst



Apple's first LP since 2005 is full of cold truths and her most raw music yet



### Fiona Apple

*The Idler Wheel... Epic*

★★★½

BY JODY ROSEN

A Fiona Apple record is a study in meticulousness and mayhem. The meticulousness is in the music – the rigorous art-pop constructions that mark Apple as an heir to songwriting sophisticates like Stephen Sondheim and Elvis Costello. And the mayhem? That's Apple herself. For a decade and a half she has been one of pop's most volatile presences: pouting, lamenting, raging, jabbing a poison pen at ruthless fate and callous ex-lovers, but always turning her most savage attacks inward, at herself.

Apple's wild-eyed self-dramatization has been her hallmark from the beginning. On *Tidal* (1996), the smash debut released when she was just 18, it seemed like adolescent angst, a mannerism she might age out of. Today, we know better: Apple's great theme – her only theme, really – is the heroic struggle going on within her own brain.

Her last album, 2005's *Extraordinary Machine*, was a richly produced chronicle of her breakup with filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson. *The Idler Wheel...* is just as rawboned emotionally, and more hard-hitting musically. She pours out her distress on driving songs with lyrics that mix romantic poetry and therapy-speak

- Byron by way of Oprah. "I'm an airplane/And the gashes I got from my heartbreak/Make the slots and the flaps upon my wing/And I use 'em to give me lift," she sings on "Daredevil." You don't expect restraint from a woman whose album title takes the form of a 23-word rhymed couplet.

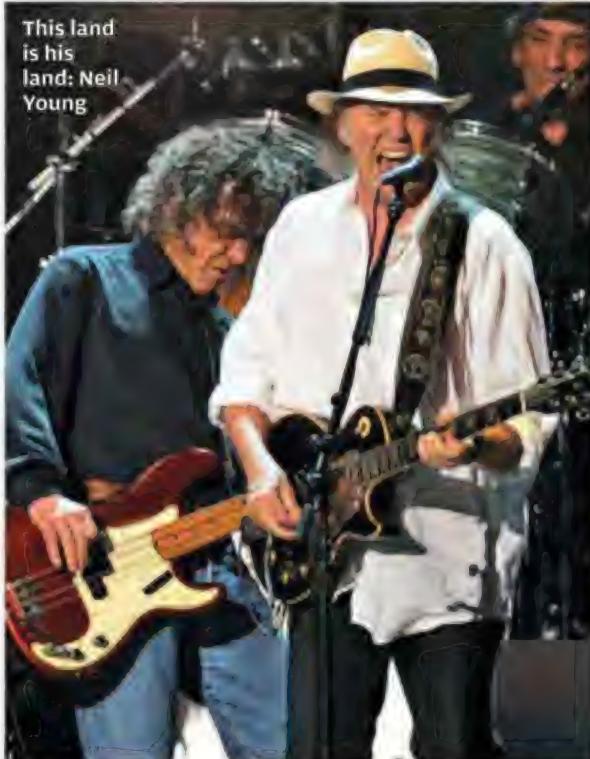
From another performer, lines like those would be a deal breaker. But with Apple you can excuse them, and even learn to love them. Apple is a true eccentric. On *The Idler Wheel...*, surprises lurk around every corner. "Left Alone" begins with some battering jazz-style drumming and segues into a deranged boogie-woogie; in "Hot Knife," a double-entendre chorus worthy of an old blues is chirruped by a multitracked choir of Apples. Throughout, Apple sings amazingly, wringing different colors from her voice in every song - twittering like a folky songbird, crooning like a cabaret chanteuse, howling like a blueswoman.

*The Idler Wheel...* is a challenging album. The songs are intricately arranged but sonically stark, foregrounding Apple's piano and the stupendous drumming of Charley Drayton. There's not a single big, chewy hook on the album. Sometimes the songs drag. The pallid piano ballad "Jonathan" - apparently a mash note to her former beau, the writer Jonathan Ames - would be a trial to sit through if it were two minutes long. It's five-plus.

But Apple's kooky energy pushes through the slow spots. And there's another kind of less out-there intensity here: the erotic kind. The most arresting singing on the album comes midway through "Daredevil," when a skittering arrangement - a kind of drunken cocktail-jazz lurch - screeches to a halt: "Wake me up - gimme, gimme, gimme what you/Got in your mind in the middle of the night!" For a moment, it's like she shares the same desires as the rest of us - even if she expresses them in a language that's utterly her own.

#### LISTEN NOW!

Hear key tracks from these albums at [rollingstone.com/albums](http://rollingstone.com/albums).



This land  
is his  
land: Neil  
Young

## Neil Young's Old, Weird America

Neil finally calls Crazy Horse back into action, and torches the "kindergarten" folk canon

**Neil Young and Crazy Horse** *Americana* Reprise

★★★½



It's been too long since Neil Young has gathered his grizzled cronies in Crazy Horse for one of their fraternal freak-guitar slopfests. *Americana* is the first full-on Horse album since the underrated 1996 gem, *Broken Arrow*. Nobody skewers expectations like Young, so there's a catch: *Americana* has no Neil Young songs, just folk standards like "Oh Susannah" and "Clementine." No clever curation or Harry Smith-style crate-digging; as Young says, "They're songs we all know from kindergarten."

There's an undeniable WTF factor in hearing these Cub Scout singalong ditties drowned in guitar feedback and off-key yelling. But that's the goofball charm. The Horse beat up on "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" (here titled "Jesus' Chariot") as if it's "Like a Hurricane." True, the doo-wop classic "Get a Job" is beyond their chops, and "This Land Is Your Land" gets spoiled with a kiddie choir. But they make the murder ballad "Tom Dula" roar like a lost cousin of "Powderfinger," and Young sings "Wayfarin' Stranger" with a surprisingly vulnerable high-lonesome twang. Now that he and the Horse are as far removed from *Ragged Glory* as *Ragged Glory* was from "Mr. Soul," he's got the right to sound weary.

**KEY TRACKS:**  
"Oh Susannah,"  
"Tom Dula"

ROB SHEFFIELD



### Waka Flocka Flame

*Triple F Life: Friends, Fans & Family*

Brick Squad Monopoly/Warner Bros.

★★★

A mesmerizingly incompetent partyer stays on his game

In one of his new album's more endearing moments, Atlanta MC Waka Flocka Flame eats a bag of chips, punctuating chomps with a zesty burp and a slurred "'scuse me." Consider it artistic growth; 2010's *Flockaveli* made no 'scuses for its mesmerizingly dumb intensity. *Triple F* is another set of barked strip-club salvos ("Versace on my ass/Two bands for my underwear/Foreign cars, foreign broads, baller of the year"), over high-hats and slurry synths from producer Lex Luger and a cast of lessers. Drake and Nicki Minaj add style, and one track is called "Power of My Pen," but classing up Waka is like putting a fig leaf over King Kong's balls.

JON DOLAN



### Japandroids

*Celebration Rock* Polyvinyl

★★★½

Ragged indie rock that's built to dominate stadiums

Imagine a different Eighties: The Replacements made *Born in the USA*, Hüsker Dü were Hulk Hogan's entrance music, and indie rock was the kegger-crushing choice of *Top Gun* America. On their second LP, Vancouver drums-guitar duo Japandroids sing about lost youth and sex and drinking atop hammer-of-the-geeks distortion swirls and holler-along refrains a gorilla could pump some paw to. It's just eight songs (including a scorched-earth oldie by Eighties L.A. garage scumbos the Gun Club), but 'Roids singer-guitarist Brian King doesn't need much time to make their point: "She'll kiss away your gypsy fears/And turn some restless nights to restless years."

J.D.

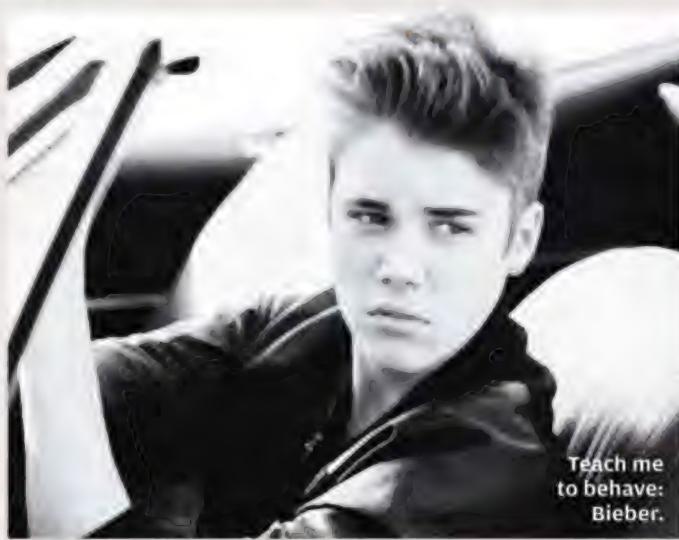
## TOP SINGLES

# Bieber's Sweet Summer Jam

Justin Bieber "Die in Your Arms" ★★★½

Released just days after he allegedly up and decked a pesky paparazzi, the second single from Justin Bieber's forthcoming *Believe* follows the self-described "swag" of "Boyfriend" with a more subtle moonwalk down the fault line between teddy bear and Timberlake. Over bubble-gum-sweet hip-hop bounce, neosoul piano flourish and a flower-bearing snatch of organ, Bieber tries on a Young Michael plea as he begs, "Teach me to behave" and "Promise you won't keep me waiting," with butterfly grace. It's the sound of Bieber rounding third base, custom-made to get played in Mom's minivan on the way to Little League practice.

JON DOLAN



Teach me  
to behave:  
Bieber.

## Dave Matthews Ponders the Fate of Humanity

Dave Matthews Band "Gaucho" ★★★



Matthews

This mankind-will-self-destruct lament (from DMB's upcoming, still-untitled album) offers a distinctly Dave-like blend of tension and uplift. Over a moody and elegant shuffle, Matthews sketches out the arc of civilization, from the invention of religion to the moon landing, and hints that the next leap won't derive from torching kind bud on Earth Day. And

the inevitable children's choir? It works against a bridge that starts darkly atmospheric and crashes into jammy skronk. Let's see Jason Mraz pull that off.

NICK CATUCCI

## Beck and Jack White's Zooted Comedy Gold

Beck "I Just Started Hating Some People Today" ★★★½ "Blue Randy" ★★★½

Is Jack White hiding a time machine at Third Man Records HQ? That's the only logical explanation for this White-produced one-off, in which Beck is transformed into a zooted prankster. The A side is a smirking Nashville pastiche ("I just started wanting to punch your face/You might want to wear a helmet just in case"); "Blue Randy" finds Beck sighing sad tales of laser tag over burnt-caramel steel guitar. If the jokes made more sense, they wouldn't be half as funny.

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON



Beck

## SHORT CUTS

### Icana Pop

"I Love It"

★★★½

On this female Swedish duo's supercatchy breakup anthem, skyscraping synth lines go up as they scream-sing about the liberation that comes from dumping a draggy partner.

MAURA JOHNSTON

### The National

"The Rain of Castamere"

★★★

As fantasy fan wish-fulfillment goes, the morose Brooklyn rockers' spare, deadly dull go at a *Game of Thrones* battle ballad ranks somewhere south of spotting Peter Dinklage walking the dog.

sickly mom climbs the success ladder, only to wind up on pills. Hence, the healing blue-eyed-soul break.

CHUCK EDDY

### Freddie Gibbs, feat. Young Jeezy and T.I.

"Pull Up"

★★★½

The mixtape-slinging Indiana MC's speedy, almost jittery, rhymes about road head and pricey paint jobs couldn't be sharper, inspiring similarly hot runs from his bigger-name pals.

N.C.

### Robin Thicke

"Top of the World"

★★★

Thicke's smooth-jazzed summer single isn't exactly beach reading: A bullied girl with a

### Big Boi and Theophilus London, feat. Tre Luce

"She Said OK"

★★★

A slow, smoky funk ode to things that get blown - such as pot and Big Boi. Not new territory, but his pimpadelic cool sucks you in.

J.D.

## BOOTLEGS

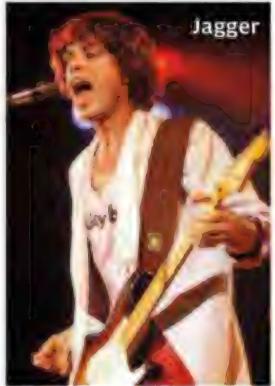
# The Rolling Stones

Bearsville Studios  
Woodstock, New York

May/June 1978

Shortly before hitting the road behind 1978's *Some Girls*, the Rolling Stones holed up at Bearsville Studios outside Woodstock, New York, to rehearse. Somehow a five-hour tape of the sessions has leaked out. Hardcore fans will love the 17-minute "Miss You," as well as rough, sloppy versions of "Memory Motel," "Beast of Burden" and "Far Away Eyes." Sometimes the rehearsals break down into long blues jogs; at one point, 90 seconds of "Gimme Shelter" evolves out of nowhere. Oldies like "Play With Fire" and "No Expectations" are particularly ragged, with Mick Jagger forgetting most of the lyrics. But even if it's a mess, this is a fascinating look behind the curtain.

ANDY GREENE



Jagger

## The Stone Roses

Parr Hall  
Warrington, England

May 23rd, 2012

Sixteen years after their implosion, these Brit-pop icons have finally announced a reunion tour. They'll play European stadiums this summer, and on May 23rd they did a surprise show at the 1,100-seat Parr Hall in Warrington. Frontman Ian Brown's voice shows very little age, and songs like "I Wanna Be Adored" and "She Bangs the Drums" have lost none of their spark. The band seems a bit under-rehearsed, but it'll have plenty of time to get in shape before Coachella rolls around next spring.

A.G.

**LISTEN NOW!** Hear these songs and more hot new tracks at [rollingstone.com/songs](http://rollingstone.com/songs).

**Patti Smith***Banga* Columbia

★ ★ ★ ½

Smith follows memoir with more fierce word-slinging

Patti Smith records are as much about poetic ritual as verse-chorus rocking out. Her first set of new music since *Just Kids* – the 2010 memoir that found her dancing barefoot into the literary mainstream – has sweet moments of song. But *Banga*'s real magic happens when the words start flying off the grooves. The peak here is "Constantine's Dream," an extended anthem to art-making that makes the Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca sound rock & roll. On a coda of Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush" featuring her kids, Smith instructs, "Look at Mother Nature on the run in the 21st century." She's a mother who still ain't runnin' from nothin'.

WILL HERMES

**My Bloody Valentine**

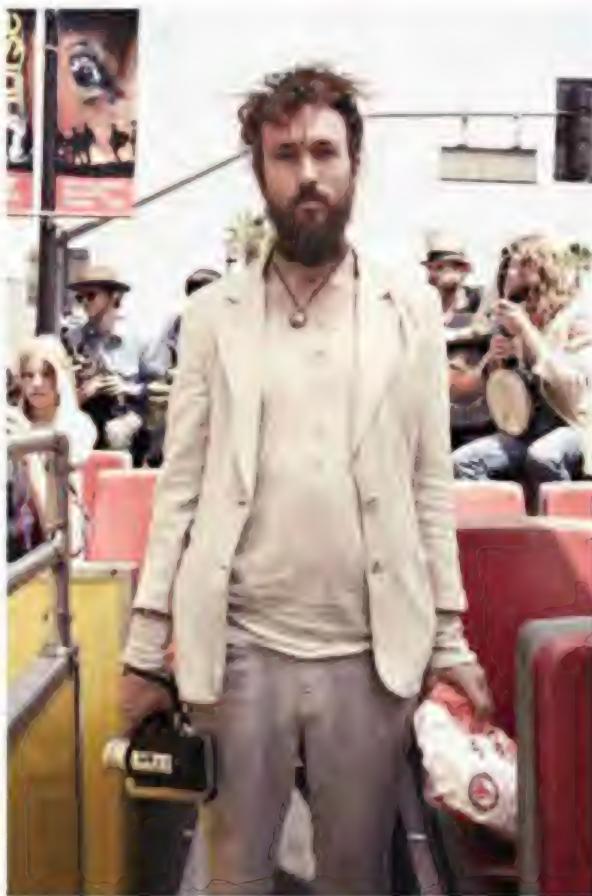
EPs 1988-1991 Sony Music U.K.

★ ★ ★ ½

Laser-beam blasts from one of rock's most innovative bands

This two-disc reissue (with bonus tracks) covers the incremental steps, in pained-pop song and wraparound guitar distortion that My Bloody Valentine took to the violent and defining rapture of their only studio albums so far, 1988's *Isn't Anything* and 1991's *Loverless* (also reissued). The succinctness of the EP format suited the British quartet's experimental ardor. The white-noise rain in "You Made Me Realise" is shocking in its brevity here – a bracing tease of the howling extended extremes it would take onstage – while "Honey Power," from '91, is a concise, gripping contradiction of Bilinda Butcher's sweet-wind voice and the pissed-off-elephant groan of Kevin Shields' guitar.

DAVID FRICKE



True believer: Magnetic Zeros frontman Alex Ebert

# The Magnetic Zeros' Good Vibrations

L.A. collective stretches out – with folk fantasias, psychedelic jams, 'Kumbaya' country

**Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros**

Here Community/Vagrant ★ ★ ★ ½



On its 2009 debut, this 12-piece ensemble went whole-hog on the hippie dream, dressing like an Aquarian cult and playing dazed acid folk that reimagined 1969 as one swaying group hug. Leader Alex Ebert was an L.A. rock journeyman, not an authentic flower puppy. But he wore his Manson beard with flair, and the second Magnetic Zeros LP taps into a slightly more down-to-earth Sixties, while Ebert pulls off a wider array of musical costumes. "Man on Fire" imagines Johnny Cash as a sexy Jesus; "All Wash Out" takes the venom out of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue"; and "Mayla" is "Kumbaya" country with "Penny Lane" trumpets. Much of the LP has a post-Altamont, let's-be-mellow-around-the-campfire vibe (see gospel-soul tunes like "That's What's Up") minus that era's sense of spiritual depletion. It's the kind of magical revisionism you can attempt 45 years down the line. And they damn near pull it off.

**KEY TRACKS:**  
"Man on Fire,"  
"Mayla"

JON DOLAN

**Joey Ramone**

"... Ya Know?" BMG

★ ★ ★ ½

Joey's buddies turn leftover demos into fuzzy goodness

Built from songs he left behind mostly as home demos, Joey Ramone's second posthumous solo album is unlikely but undeniable dynamite: buoyant fuzz-box pop with no stitches showing in the new overdubs by fans and peers such as Steven Van Zandt, Joan Jett and the Dictators' Andy Shernoff. Joey pursued Stooges-like basics and Phil Spector-size romance with the same zeal both in and out of the Ramones, and many songs here, like "New York City" and "Seven Days of Gloom," would have fit on – and improved – some of that band's later, spotty albums. "Rock 'n roll is the answer," Joey sings in one title chorus, in fine and familiar voice – a true believer to the end.

D.F.

**Big K.R.I.T.**

Live From the Underground

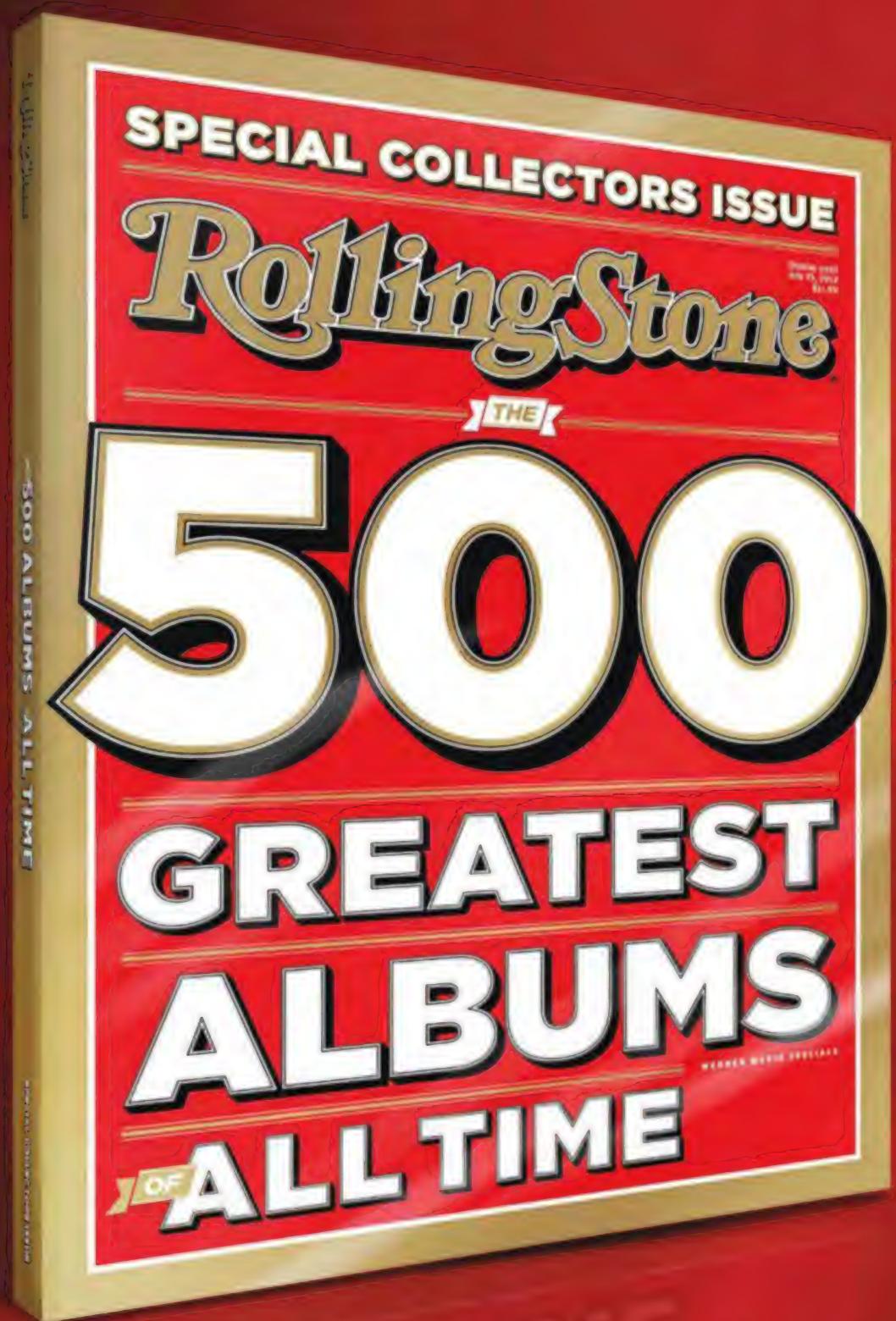
Def Jam

★ ★ ★ ½

MC's official debut is full of hot grooves, Southern hospitality

"If you're lookin' for a Southern country bumpkin, let me be it," Meridian, Mississippi, rapper-producer Big K.R.I.T. proclaims on his major-label debut. As on his mixtapes, this lovable throwback evokes his down-home life and day-to-day grind over the playacardilistic grooves of vintage Outkast and UGK. But his retro vision is wide; B.B. King appears on the politically minded "Praying Man," and the melody of "Don't Let Me Down" recalls the Beatles track of the same name. K.R.I.T. isn't flashy, but his spry, liquid verses are full of empathy, even for the haters: "It's hard to celebrate for others when you're dying poor." His underground is open to everyone.

J.D.



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**A Perfect Haze** Harvey Kubernik and Kenneth Kubernik  
Santa Monica Press ★★★½

The 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival was America's first mass gathering of rock bands – and the first alternative-rock festival. Everyone who made legend on that California stage was new: the Who, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Otis Redding (who was experiencing his crossover breakout). Rich in rare photos, *A Perfect Haze* is a definitive talking-book account of the impossible standard that weekend set for future festivals like Coachella and Bonnaroo. There are revelations even after 45 years: Hendrix invited Al Kooper to jam on "Like a Rolling Stone." Kooper, working as a stage manager, declined – "Another," he says, "of my great career moves."

DAVID FRICKE



**Ernie K-Doe: The R&B Emperor of New Orleans**  
Ben Sandmel The Historic New Orleans Collection ★★★★

For one week in 1961, the New Orleans singer Ernie K-Doe was the Number One voice in America, with the funky domestic complaint "Mother-in-Law." In his mind, K-Doe – a man of extravagant ego and underrated vocal grit who later performed for Paul McCartney and Led Zeppelin – never lost his crown. With passionate R&B-detective research and eyewitness accounts from local legends like Dr. John and Allen Toussaint, Ben Sandmel vividly captures K-Doe's wild rise out of poverty, the riches on his many 45s and his long, strange rebirth as a Crescent City treasure. In a city that breeds and adores gifted eccentrics, K-Doe was royalty. And he reigned in style.

D.F.



**Fear of Music** Jonathan Lethem Continuum Books ★★★★

At 15, Jonathan Lethem felt an "abject identification" with *Fear of Music*, the 1979 album on which Talking Heads depict the futility of everyday objects. Now an acclaimed novelist, he spins the record until its notes fly out into a world of tangents. Lethem (whose book is part of the 33 1/3 series of single-album histories and meditations) spots connections that range from Star Trek to Freud, and finds "subtle contradiction[s], tiny fissures and slippages" in its themes. There are many factual errors (Mick Jagger didn't go to art school), but this is the best book ever written about Talking Heads. As Lethem stalks *Fear of Music*, examining it like a crime scene, he proves that obsession can have its rewards.

ROB TANNENBAUM



**Usher**  
*Looking 4 Myself* RCA  
★★★½

Stretching out with funk,  
rave-ups and "Uptown Girl"

The only thing that rings false on Usher's seventh LP is the title: If there's anyone in music who doesn't have an identity crisis, it's Usher Raymond; the theme here, such as it is, is his own versatility. Club rave-ups, hip-hop ballads, synth pop, blaxploitation funk, a Max Martin song, a Will.i.am jam that borrows from "Uptown Girl" – all here. You'll need the deluxe edition to hear Usher sing, "Let's get together and exchange fuck faces." It's a ridiculous lyric, but – shocker – he makes it work.

JODY ROSEN



**Bobby Womack**  
*The Bravest Man in  
the Universe* XL  
★★★½

A soul great and a Gorilla  
roll into the future

Sixty-eight-year-old soul survivor Bobby Womack lent his growl on the last two Gorillaz LPs, so this foray into dubby digital funk with Damon Albarn and English record exec Richard Russell doesn't feel at all like a stretch. He's at home testifying over coolly throbbing beats, and on the anti-war title track Womack pleads for brotherly forgiveness over an ominous, jazz-tinged creeping – a classic sentiment updated for the era of drone attacks and wiretaps.

JON DOLAN



**Silversun Pickups**  
*Neck of the Woods*  
Dangerbird  
★★★½

L.A. band makes Nineties  
retro rock that feels fresh

On two previous discs, this L.A. band tapped into the shoegaze majesty of peak Smashing Pumpkins. There's more digital sounds underneath the guitar haze this time; electronic burblings undergird "Gun-Shy Sunshine," and songs like "The Pit" recall Garbage's synched-up attack. Brian Aubert injects wispy drama, balancing moppy-haired brooding and bracing alt-rock moves. Most of those moves are borrowed, but he makes each nicked noise his own.

J.D.



Simon on the  
Graceland  
tour in 1987

## When 'World Music' Became Universal

The global-pop masterpiece that redefined Eighties music keeps getting better with time

**Paul Simon**

*Graceland 25th Anniversary  
Collector's Edition Box Set* Sony/Legacy



★★★★★



This deluxe package includes a luminous remastered version of Paul Simon's landmark African-pop album, previously unreleased demos, a live concert DVD and a revealing making-of documentary. Recording in apartheid-era South Africa with local musicians was bold; the marriage of township grooves and shapely, revealing songwriting was groundbreaking. It's hard to even remember the charges of cultural imperialism that greeted *Graceland* when it was released. Today, the glorious bounce of "Graceland" and "You Can Call Me Al" reminds us that, for all of Simon's genius with tunes and lyrics, it's his rhythmic searching and sophistication that sets him apart.

JODY ROSEN

**KEY TRACKS:** "Graceland," "You Can Call Me Al"



**Kylie Minogue**

*The Best of Kylie Minogue*  
EMI

★★★★★

Twenty-five years of hits from the queen of Aussie pop

With electronic grooves dominating Top 40 radio, Australia's Kylie Minogue and her euphoric dance pop are more relevant than ever. This 21-track set plays like a crash course in the history of international club style – from the aerobic core of her fluke 1988 hit "The Loco-Motion" to 2010's feistier French house-inspired "Get Outta My Way."

BARRY WALTERS



**Hot Chip**

*In Our Heads* Domino

★★★★½

U.K. dance pop that brings first-rate songs and fiery beats

Few bands can fill a dance floor with melody, soul and electro intensity like Hot Chip. There's unguarded joy in the British quintet's mix of synthed-up grooves and pop songfulness on tracks like "Don't Deny Your Heart." Their communal vocals are always warm and nuanced, with leader Alexis Taylor merging Davy Jones' innocence with the mirror-ball yearning of Erasure's Andy Bell.

EVIE NAGY

# JAY PHAROAH

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Friends with Samantha Urbani (second from right)

## Friends

LCD Soundsystem are dead, but adventurous New York dance rock lives on

*Manifest!* Fat Possum ★★★½

"Ethically, it's pretty fucked," coos Friends singer Samantha Urbani on "Sorry," weighing her guilt over a sketchy love affair before shrugging. "I want you to come over to my house." Sure, we're in! The sexy Bushwick, Brooklyn, outfit sounds less conflicted elsewhere on a debut that often recalls New York's Eighties downtown glory days, when punk, funk and disco commingled on labels like 99 and ZE. Percussion-packed rhythms rule on *Manifest!*, and Urbani's raplike verses sometimes favor flow over literal meaning - see the call-and-response holler "Van Fan Gor Du," which nearly means "What the hell are you doing?" in Swedish. The band's sweet B-side reading of Ghost Town DJs' 1996 hit "My Boo" is sadly absent from the album. But these guys clearly don't need covers to throw a killer rent party.

WILL HERMES

ARTIST  
TO  
WATCH

### KEY FACTS

HOMETOWN Brooklyn

BACKSTORY Friends formed in 2010, when singer Samantha Urbani suddenly found her Bushwick apartment full of three future bandmates - two of whom were escaping a bedbug infestation. They

began writing songs and held their first show in Urbani's backyard six days later.

GROOVE-SMART Friends partly credit salsa music and tunes from the African nation of Burundi for the group's savvy rhythms.



**Metric**

*Synthetica* Metric Music International/Mom + Pop  
★★★½

A sexy synth-rock trip, with a cameo from a gruff hero



**Joe Bonamassa**

*Driving Towards the Daylight* J & R Adventures  
★★★

Blues-rock leading light lets the notes fly on jammy LP

On the fifth album from this Canadian-American band, muscular rhythms tether spun-sugar synthesizers to Earth, while Emily Haines' vocals toe the line between vulnerability and world-weariness. The effect is of a lucid dream world - and then Lou Reed pops up on "Wanderlust," his craggy voice serving as a fine foil to all the New Wave shimmer.

MAURA JOHNSTON

Blues rock is no Twitter-style genre - decades after U.K. guitarists reimagined American plaints as expansive showpieces, it's still best when practitioners stretch out. A couple of tracks on Bonamassa's 13th LP nod to Howlin' Wolf and Robert Johnson. But he excels on longer pieces like the title song, where his exacting singing blends with fiery symphonic playing.

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**BACK  
STAGE  
PASS**

**"One of Modern Rock's  
Most Dynamic Frontwomen..."**  
- BILLBOARD



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# The Boombox, Rebooted

New portable speakers offer surprisingly good sound, straight from your phone. Grab one of these and turn your next beach hang into a blowout

**BEST SOUND**
**Bose SoundLink**

\$299 ★★★★

This speaker is only the size of a Gideons Bible, but it's the one more likely to get you kicked out of the Comfort Inn, thanks to a bass-heavy, distortion-free sound. Like the Big JAMBOX, wirelessly pairing it with phones and tablets via Bluetooth takes just a second. And its rugged build should withstand the most rauvous affairs.


**BEST FEATURES**
**Big JAMBOX**

\$299 ★★★★

This steel beauty has a size and weight similar to the Bose but puts out a brighter sound. Though it can distort at the highest volume levels, the JAMBOX has a couple of advantages: It also works as a speakerphone, and its rechargeable battery keeps the party going longer - we got 12 hours of continuous play, versus SoundLink's eight.

JESSE WILL


**Santana**

*Shape Shifter* Starfaith

★★½

Watered-down instrumentals from a guitar hero

As he proved in 1969 with "Soul Sacrifice" and frequently thereafter, Carlos Santana doesn't need lyrics to make eloquent music. This largely instrumental debut release on his own label has moments of shit-hot playing (see the smeared runs on "Metatron"). But the arrangements, oversweetened with too many synthesizers, lean toward lite jazz. Maybe fellow Latin-rock visionaries the Mars Volta could sign on for *Volume Two*? W.H.


**The dB's**

*Falling Off the Sky* Bar/None

★★★

Beloved indie-pop old-timers haven't lost a step

In the early Eighties, these New Wave Southern boys reanimated the Beatles as magnolia-scented power pop, setting the table for R.E.M. The original dB's haven't recorded in 30 years, but Peter Holsapple and fellow hook maven Chris Stamey remain masters of stately jangle, and their writing now has a reflective depth that makes for music that's wise ("She Won't Drive in the Rain Anymore"), as well as crafty. J.D.


**Far East Movement**

*Dirty Bass* Cherrytree/Interscope

★★★

"Like a G6" guys make Will.i.am look like Bon Iver

The first Asian-American pop act ever to have a Number One record (2010's "Like a G6") returns with another set of thunder-stick-waving electro pop that can make the Black Eyed Peas seem demure and self-doubting by comparison. Justin Bieber and Pitbull party hard over glossy beats that exude a "just got out of jail" feeling, and the subtly floaty ballad "Flossy" shows that Far East Movement can play small-ball, too. JON DOLAN


**Amadou and Mariam**

*Folila* Because/Nonesuch

★★★½

Afropop that stretches from Bamako to Bushwick

Africa's great husband-wife duo bring their trance vocals and shredding guitar grooves to Brooklyn, where they rock out with Santigold, members of TV on the Radio and others. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner adds guitar squall, and U.K. prog-soul diva Ebony Bones makes the line "But she's got too much melanin" into a giddy party chant. The result is cultural exchange with ears pricked high. WILL HERMES


**Cornershop**

*Urban Turban* Ample Play

★★★

Anglo-Punjabi band throws a groove party, with new guests

For his band's eighth album, Cornershop's Tjinder Singh called in reinforcements: Swedish songstress Izzy Lindqwister; SoKo, a French songstress who sounds like a Swedish songstress; and a bunch of English kindergartners, who light up a track called "What Did the Hippie Have in His Bag?" If Singh's genial, lounge-y tunes don't always hit groove nirvana, his wandering heart is at least in the right place. JODY ROSEN


**Todd Snider**

*Time as We Know It: The Songs of Jerry Jeff Walker*

Aimless

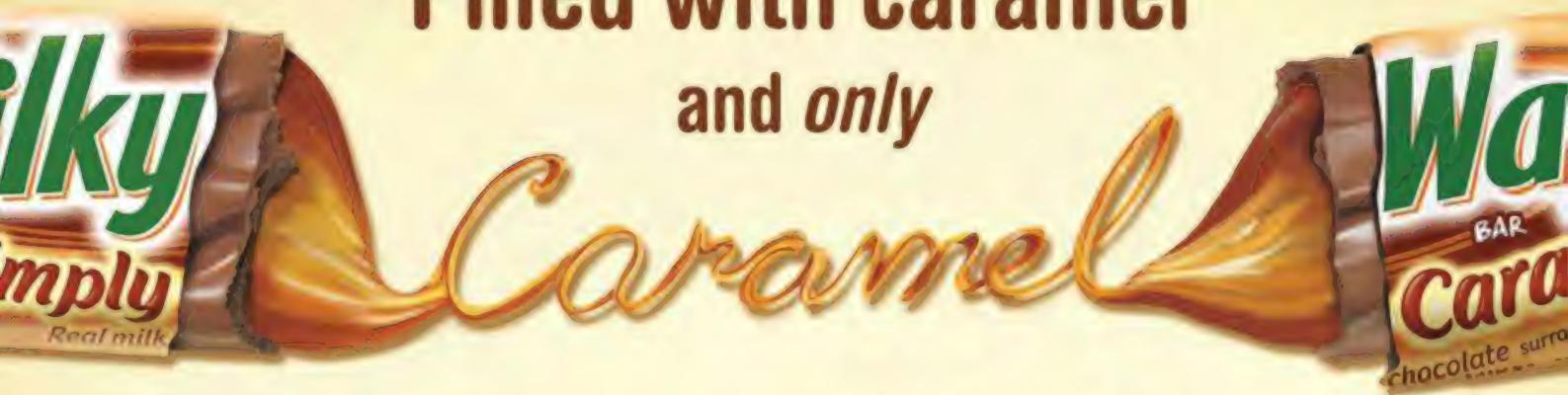
★★★

One talented folk-rock populist salutes another

Todd Snider credits his transformation into stoner-folk troubadour to a Jerry Jeff Walker show he saw at 19. This covers LP pays tribute on 14 narrative-heavy tracks, from the jailhouse ballad "Mr. Bojangles" to the beer-soaked "Takin' It as It Comes." Recorded in four days, it's loose and rough - just how Jerry Jeff would want it. PATRICK DOYLE

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# Movies

BY PETER TRAVERS

ANY WAY  
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Baldwin and  
Cruise bring  
the fun.



## Rock Gods and Giggles

Pour some sugar on Tom Cruise - he kills as a zonked-out rocker in this all-star musical romp

### Rock of Ages

*Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin*  
Directed by Adam Shankman

★★★

BUILT ON HAIR-METAL HITS from the 1980s, *Rock of Ages* has been confounding critics and wowing audiences from Los Angeles to Broadway since it first opened in 2005. It had to become a movie. OK, maybe it didn't. But director Adam Shankman (*Hairspray*), working from a script by Justin Theroux, Chris D'Arienzo and Allan Loeb, wisely takes little notice of the plot about how country girl Sherrie (Julianne Hough) and city boy Drew (Diego Boneta) fall in love while trying to hit the music business with their best shot on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, circa 1987.

Shankman knows where the emphasis should be: on "sweat, ear-shattering music and puke," in the words of Dennis Dupree, the Bourbon Room owner played by a wonderfully wiggy Alec Baldwin. Dennis is fighting to save his club, modeled on the Roxy and the Whisky. For that he needs rock icon Stacee Jaxx (Tom Cruise), the lead

singer of Arsenal, the band set to make its farewell appearance at the Bourbon before Stacee goes solo. Stacee's greedy manager, Paul Gill (Paul Giamatti, glorious), plans to scam the take from Dennis and his adoring sound technician, Lonny (Russell Brand). Worse, Patri-

cia Whitmore (a powerhouse Catherine Zeta-Jones), the wife of the mayor (Bryan Cranston), wants to close down the sinful club scene, where even sweet Sherrie takes a job at a strip joint run by Justice (the inimitable Mary J. Blige). To amp up Stacee's last show, an inter-

view is arranged with ROLLING STONE reporter Constance Sack (Malin Akerman), who is soon having a sexual duet with her subject on a pool table (a shocking breach for RS correspondents – the table, I mean).

These megasilly complications would flatten any other movie. But the hugely enjoyable *Rock of Ages* is saved by its music, a tasty brew drawn from Def Leppard, Journey, Foreigner, Bon Jovi, REO Speedwagon, Pat Benatar, Twisted Sister, Poison and Whitesnake. It's near impossible not to rock along. No wonder *Rock of Ages* is known on Broadway as "Mamma Mia! for metalheads."

But even if you never again want to listen to "Don't Stop Believin'," there's no denying the party-time pow of *Rock of Ages*, or of Cruise's performance. He's phenomenal. He gets all the moves right – the sound, too (check him out on Bon Jovi's "Wanted Dead or Alive"). Better yet, he finds the heart that still beats inside the bare chest of this sex, drugs and rock & roll casualty. In a movie that only wants to rock you, Cruise plays it for keeps. Resistance is futile.



## Safety Not Guaranteed

*Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass*  
Directed by Colin Trevorrow

★★★

Sometimes a movie comes out of nowhere and wins you over. *Safety Not Guaranteed* is that kind of unexpected gift. At first, the story smacks of quirk: A loner (Mark Duplass) places an ad for a partner to join him in traveling back in time ("Must

bring your own weapons. Safety not guaranteed"). Tracking the story are Seattle journo Jeff (Jake Johnson), Arnau (Karan Soni) and Darius (Aubrey Plaza), who falls for the big guy. Director Colin Trevorrow and writer Derek Connolly keep the film humming with funny and touching surprises. And Plaza is a flat-out enchantress.

## Snow White and the Huntsman

Kristen Stewart, Charlize Theron, Chris Hemsworth  
Directed by Rupert Sanders

★★½

**YOU DON'T NEED A VOICE IN** a mirror to tell you which recent Snow White movie is the fairest of them all. *Snow White and the Huntsman* has *Mirror Mirror* beat by a mile. Director Rupert Sanders made his bones in commercials and Xbox games, and his debut feature is a visual marvel. Not in the way of the chirpy, witless, postcard-ready *Mirror Mirror*, in which Lily Collins played an unthreatening Snow and Julia Roberts merely swanned around as the Evil Queen. Sanders' take on the classic fairy tale is as grim as, well, the Brothers Grimm originally intended. It has a darkness that seeps into the soul.

OK, now that I've scared away the children, we can talk. Credit Sanders for assembling an intriguing cast. Kristen Stewart, freed from the bonds of *Twilight*, morphs convincingly from a skittish girl into a determined warrior princess. Her Snow White knows that Evil Queen Ravenna (Charlize Theron), her stepmother, murdered her father on their marriage bed and now wants Snow dead so she can eat her heart out. Literally. Otherwise, there's no way the Queen can stay the fairest in the land, since Snow is looking good.

The Queen dispatches the Huntsman (*Thor*'s Chris Hemsworth) to the Dark Forest to find Snow and perform his own brand of thoracic surgery. But the Huntsman, a drunken widower, begins to see Snow's point. Then there's the matter of the seven dwarfs (eight in this version). A bunch of scruffier forest shits you couldn't find anywhere. And they're far from little darlings as played by the formidable likes of Ian McShane, Ray Winstone, Eddie Marsan, Toby Jones, Nick Frost and Bob Hoskins, all shrunk down to dwarf size. "Let her rot," they shriek in a manner that hardly befits a toy-doll collection.

This is all to the good. What rankles is that Sanders loses his nerve just when the story

starts cooking. Stewart looks strong on horseback in armor, and it's satisfying that Snow and the Huntsman never even think of getting it on. This sister is definitely doing it for herself. But Sanders leads her on a conventional route to the film's climax. Also, as a director of actors, Sanders has no flair for modulation. Theron is every inch the imperious Queen, and the way her silence simmers is something to behold. But when the Queen starts ranting like a Real Housewife of Castle Bitch, Theron's power dwindles.

*Snow White and the*

*Ami*, an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's 1885 novel of social ambition, bathes him in a dark romanticism that evokes Edward Cullen. As Georges Duroy, a former cavalry officer in Algeria now eager to lead the good life in belle-époque Paris, Pattinson gives the role a beauty eaten away by greed.

The film begins promisingly enough with the bedraggled Georges looking longingly through the windows of a chic Paris restaurant where the rich conspicuously enjoy their privileges. It's connect-the-dots screenwriting from Ra-

eleine, Georges gets a job at the paper and deludes himself that he has talent. When the light dawns, Georges amuses himself with the married Clotilde (a vibrant Christina Ricci), and then with the prim Virginie (Kristin Scott Thomas), the wife of the paper's editor (Colm Meaney). With that cast, we rightfully expect fireworks. What we get is the film equivalent of a wet blanket.

## Your Sister's Sister

Emily Blunt, Rosemarie DeWitt, Mark Duplass  
Directed by Lynn Shelton

★★★

**RELATIONSHIPS ARE KILLERS**, and this tough, tender, deeply satisfying romantic comedy from writer-director Lynn Shelton (*Humpday*) is also bruisingly funny. After his brother's death, Jack (Mark Duplass) takes an offer from his platonic friend Iris (Emily Blunt) to chill at her family's island cottage. Expecting solitude, Jack finds Iris' older sister, Hannah (Rosemarie DeWitt), nursing her own wounds after breaking up with her girlfriend of seven years. A tequila night ends with Jack and Hannah improbably in bed and Iris' arrival the next morning as Jack and Hannah try to hide all evidence of their one-nighter.

If this is sounding contrived to you, hold on. Shelton knows the issues that divide lovers, families and friends. It's clear Jack has always harbored intense feelings for Iris. But what are Hannah's motives? I'll never tell. What I will say is that Shelton has lucked out with three exceptional actors to tell her story. Duplass, also in *Safety Not Guaranteed* (see page 84), has a remarkable ease at letting us inside Jack's secret heart.

As for Blunt and DeWitt, let's start at "dynamite." These two play sisters as if they've lived together for years. Blunt radiates warmth and humor, and DeWitt shows the sharp edges Hannah keeps hidden. A trio of superb performances guide a plot that pivots on secrets and lies before they fester. *Your Sister's Sister* works its way into your head until you can't stop thinking about it. Don't know about you, but I'd call that a winning proposition.



### TWILIGHT BREAKOUT

Kristen Stewart plays a warrior Snow White; Robert Pattinson is a Paris gigolo in *Bel Ami*.

*Huntsman* is definitely a missed opportunity. Sanders was on to something in taking the Snow White tale to its most menacing extreme. Right now, he lacks the skill set to shape and mold what's in his head to screen proportions. But the good news is that Sanders has the potential to do just that. Today's misfire just might turn into tomorrow's masterwork.

### Bel Ami

Robert Pattinson, Uma Thurman, Christina Ricci  
Directed by Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod

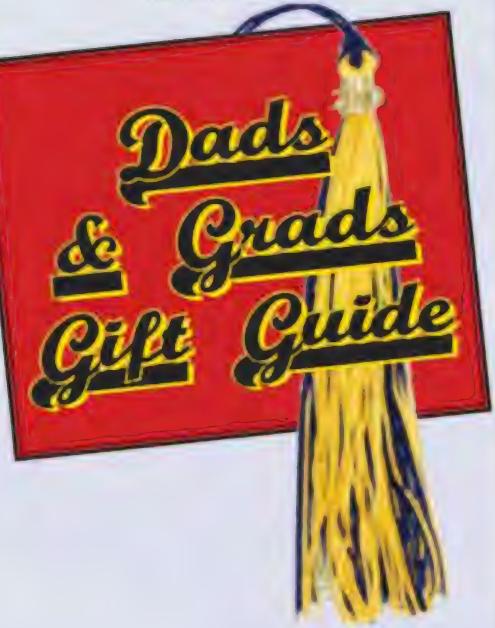
★½

**ROBERT PATTINSON, KRISTEN** Stewart's partner in life and *Twilight*, has also had a difficult time breaking free of his vampire roots (see *Remember Me* and *Water for Elephants*). Unfortunately, *Bel*



chel Bennette that reduces his chances to build the character into something substantial, as Georges realizes his only talent might be seduction. Directors Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod, whose theater work with the Cheek by Jowl company they founded is marked by a distinction absent here, structure their film around lock-step encounters between Georges and the women who warm his bed and make his fortune.

Uma Thurman plays Madeline, the wife of his former army buddy Charles Forestier (Philip Glenister), the political editor of the newspaper *La Vie Française*. Thanks to Mad-



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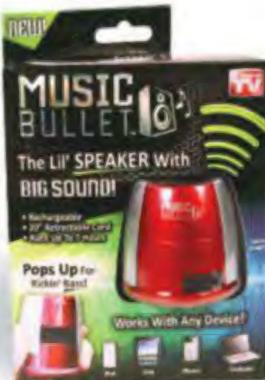
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# CHARTS

## iTUNES TOP 10 SONGS

- 1 Carly Rae Jepsen** "Call Me Maybe" *Scholay/Interscope*
- 2 Maroon 5** "Payphone" *A&M/Octone*
- 3 Gotye** "Somebody That I Used to Know" *Samples N' Seconds/Fairfax*
- 4 Nicki Minaj** "Starships" *Young Money/Cash Money*
- 5 Pitbull** "Back in Time" *RCA*
- 6 Justin Bieber** "Boyfriend" *RBMG/Schoolboy/Island*
- 7 fun.** "We Are Young" *Fueled by Ramen*
- 8 Flo Rida** "Wild Ones" *Poe Boy/Atlantic*
- 9 Rihanna** "Where Have You Been" *SRP/Def Jam*
- 10 Usher** "Scream" *RCA*

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## COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- 1 Beach House** Bloom *Sub Pop*
- 2 Jack White** Blunderbuss *Third Man/Columbia*
- 3 Best Coast** The Only Place *Mexican Summer*
- 4 Father John Misty** Fear Fun *Sub Pop*
- 5 Santigold** Master of My Make-Believe *Atlantic*
- 6 Alabama Shakes** Boys & Girls *ATO*
- 7 Spiritualized** Sweet Heart Sweet Light *Fat Possum*
- 8 Lower Dens** Nootropics *Ribbon*
- 9 Silversun Pickups** Neck of the Woods *Dangerbird*
- 10 Dandy Warhols** This Machine *The End*

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## From the Vault

RS 371, June 10th, 1982

### TOP 10 SINGLES

- 1 Paul McCartney With Stevie Wonder** "Ebony and Ivory" *Columbia*
- 2 Rick Springfield** "Don't Talk to Strangers" *RCA*
- 3 The Human League** "Don't You Want Me" *A&M*
- 4 Ray Parker Jr.** "The Other Woman" *Arista*
- 5 Willie Nelson** "Always on My Mind" *Columbia*
- 6 Asia** "Heat of the Moment" *Geffen*
- 7 Toto** "Rosanna" *Columbia*
- 8 Joan Jett and the Blackhearts** "Crimson and Clover" *Boardwalk*
- 9 Tommy Tutone** "867-5309/Jenny" *Columbia*
- 10 Deniece Williams** "It's Gonna Take a Miracle" *ARC*



### On the Cover

"My friends and I weren't in the honor society, so we made fun of the honor society. We couldn't go out with the really good-looking girls. We'd find the best-looking girl and we'd just go egg her house on the theory 'Screw you, I know you're not gonna go out with me.'" —David Letterman

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## Top 40 Albums

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>1 NEW</b>    | <b>John Mayer</b><br>Born and Raised <i>Columbia</i>   |
| <b>2 2</b>      | <b>Adele</b><br>21 <i>XL/Columbia</i>  |
| <b>3 3</b>      | <b>Carrie Underwood</b><br>Blown Away <i>19/Arista Nashville</i>                                 |
| <b>4 NEW</b>    | <b>Slash</b><br>Apocalyptic Love <i>Dik Hayd</i>   |
| <b>5 10</b>     | <b>One Direction</b><br>Up All Night <i>Syco/Columbia</i>  |
| <b>6 9</b>      | <b>Lionel Richie</b><br>Tuskegee <i>Mercury Nashville</i>  |
| <b>7 NEW</b>    | <b>MercyMe</b><br>The Hurt & the Healer <i>Fair Trade/Columbia</i>                               |
| <b>8 NEW</b>    | <b>Sara Bareilles</b><br>Once Upon Another Time (EP) <i>Epic</i>                                 |
| <b>9 6</b>      | <b>NOW 42</b><br>Various Artists <i>Universal/EMI/Sony Music</i>                                 |
| <b>10 5</b>     | <b>Norah Jones</b><br>... Little Broken Hearts <i>Blue Note</i>                                  |
| <b>11 NEW</b>   | <b>Phillip Phillips</b><br>American Idol: Season 11 Journey to the Finale <i>19/Digital Ex</i>   |
| <b>12 1</b>     | <b>Adam Lambert</b><br>Trespassing <i>19</i>   |
| <b>13 17</b>    | <b>Garbage</b><br>Not Your Kind of People <i>Stun Volume</i>                                     |
| <b>14 NEW</b>   | <b>Kimbra</b><br>Vows <i>Warner Bros.</i>  |
| <b>15 14</b>    | <b>Luke Bryan</b><br>Tailgates & Tanlines <i>Capitol Nashville</i>                               |
| <b>16 13</b>    | <b>Gotye</b><br>Making Mirrors <i>Samples N' Seconds/Fairfax</i>                                 |
| <b>17 NEW</b>   | <b>Haley Reinhart</b><br>Listen Up! <i>19/Interscope</i>   |
| <b>18 8</b>     | <b>Glee: The Music</b><br>Season Three: The Graduation Album <i>20th Century Fox TV/Columbia</i> |
| <b>19 12</b>    | <b>Jack White</b><br>Blunderbuss <i>Third Man/Columbia</i>                                       |
| <b>20 39</b>    | <b>Of Monsters and Men</b><br>My Head Is an Animal <i>Universal Republic</i>                     |
| <b>21 NEW</b>   | <b>American Idol</b><br>Season 11: Top 2 Season Finale <i>19/Digital Ex</i>                      |
| <b>22 15</b>    | <b>Nicki Minaj</b><br>Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded <i>Young Money/Cash Money</i>                  |
| <b>23 NEW</b>   | <b>Joe Bonamassa</b><br>Driving Towards the Daylight <i>J &amp; R Adventures</i>                 |
| <b>24 NEW</b>   | <b>Paul and Linda McCartney</b><br>Ram <i>MPL/Hear</i>   |
| <b>25 NEW</b>   | <b>Tedeschi Trucks Band</b><br>Live: Everybody's Talkin' <i>Masterworks</i>                      |
| <b>26 NEW</b>   | <b>Kris Allen</b><br>Thank You Camellia <i>19</i>  |
| <b>27 29</b>    | <b>fun.</b><br>Some Nights <i>Fueled by Ramen</i>  |
| <b>28 22</b>    | <b>Eric Church</b><br>Chief <i>EMI Nashville</i>   |
| <b>29 121 ↑</b> | <b>Pink Floyd</b><br>The Wall <i>Capitol</i>   |
| <b>30 4</b>     | <b>Tenacious D</b><br>Rize of the Fenix <i>Columbia</i>  |
| <b>31 23</b>    | <b>Jason Aldean</b><br>My Kinda Party <i>Broken Bow</i>  |
| <b>32 21</b>    | <b>Jason Mraz</b><br>Love Is a Four Letter Word <i>Atlantic</i>                                  |
| <b>33 7</b>     | <b>Beach House</b><br>Bloom <i>Sub Pop</i>   |
| <b>34 20</b>    | <b>B.o.B</b><br>Strange Clouds <i>Rebel Rock/Grand Hustle/Atlantic</i>                           |
| <b>35 30</b>    | <b>Alabama Shakes</b><br>Boys & Girls <i>ATO</i>   |
| <b>36 NEW</b>   | <b>The Cult</b><br>Choice of Weapon <i>Shamrock Solutions/Timeless Solutions/Cooking Vinyl</i>   |
| <b>37 28</b>    | <b>Rihanna</b><br>Talk That Talk <i>SRP/Def Jam</i>  |
| <b>38 51</b>    | <b>Kelly Clarkson</b><br>Stronger <i>19</i>  |
| <b>39 11</b>    | <b>Smash</b><br>Soundtrack <i>NBC/Columbia</i>   |
| <b>40 26</b>    | <b>Kip Moore</b><br>Up All Night <i>MCA Nashville</i>  |



### Here's Johnny!

Throat problems prevented Mayer from touring behind his new LP, *Born and Raised* – but it's still a hit, selling 219,000 copies in Week One.



### Slash and Burn

For his new album, Slash called rock shrike Myles Kennedy, who filled in for Axl Rose at the Rock Hall of Fame induction. It sold 38,000 LPs in Week One.



### Fresh Garbage

The alt-rock pioneers' first LP since 2005 is packed with distorted riffs and dramatic vocals from Shirley Manson. It sold 41,444 copies in two weeks.



### Ram On

The deluxe reissue of the McCartneys' 1971 LP is loaded with killer extras: unreleased tracks, a book of home photos and a making-of DVD.

OO Chart position on May 30th, 2012  
OO Chart position on May 23rd, 2012  
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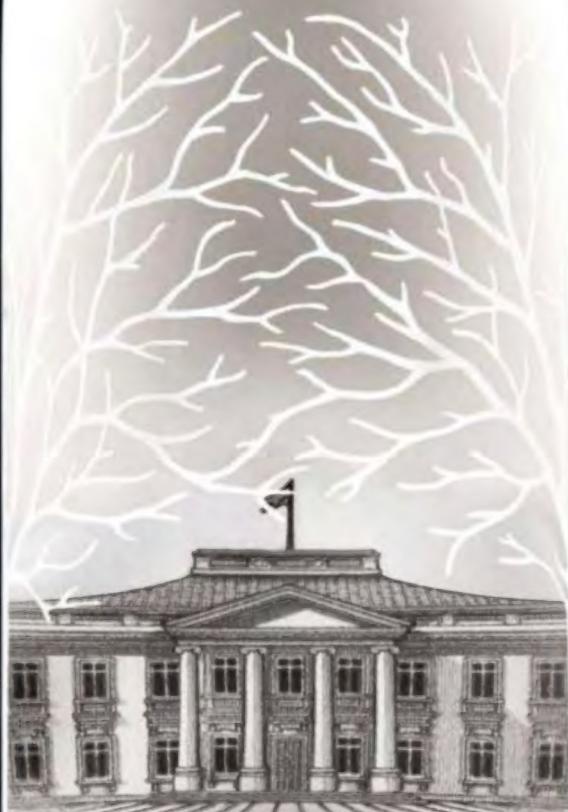
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